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Photograph by Catherine Gratwicke. Styling by Ben Kendrick. Country Living Magazine 30th-anniversary special-edition bicycle (also available in duck-egg blue), Pashley. Window frame and door painted in First Dawn exterior gloss; walls in white masonry paint: both Dulux Weathershield. Lantern, buckets and accessories, similar from Grand Illusions. Bunting made from Mimi Check cotton, Harlequin. For stockists, see Where to Buy



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FIRST WORDS FROM THE EDITOR



The joys of spring...

are many and, to my mind, unmatched. The sights, smells and sounds that signal the end of winter are true cause for celebration and in this April issue of *Country Living* we have them in abundance. On page 16 our ideas for an Easter party fill the whole house from front door to table with colour and scent. Sunshine yellows appear again in the stunning images on page 72, where fields of golden daffodils herald the coming of spring on a family farm in Cornwall and, indeed, it is colour, too, that inspires our decorating pages this month. Interiors expert Jane Cumberbatch has stylish suggestions for introducing just a little splash of colour, or for brightening up every room. So if you're tired of shades of grey, turn straight to page 54 for a wealth of inspiration on how to bring colour and cheer to your home!

Lucy Smith



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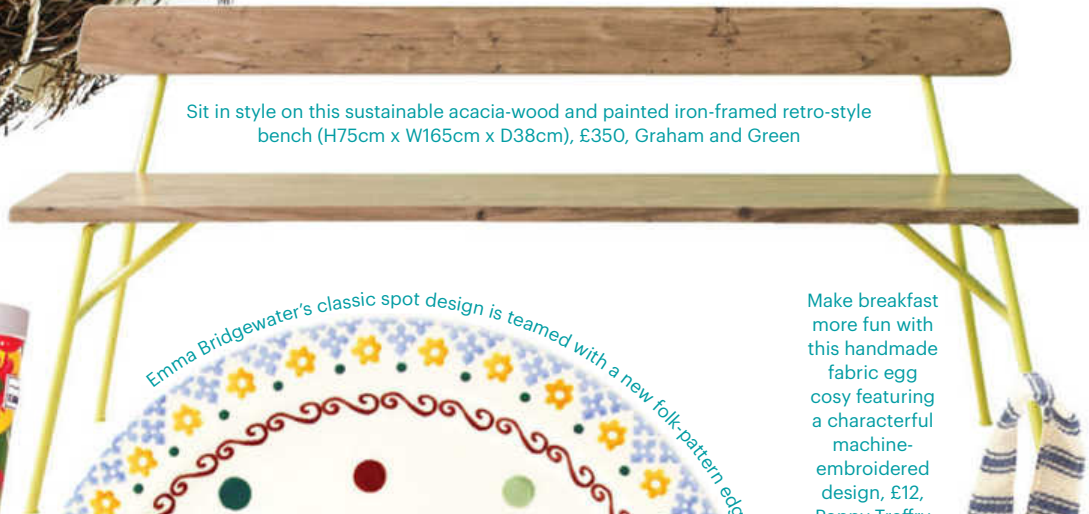
Combine jaunty accessories in bright spring shades with rustic elements to give your home a fresh, seasonal feel



Add a distinctive decorative touch with this faux feather, egg and hedgerow wreath, £18 (30cm diameter), John Lewis



This versatile linen-mix basket provides useful storage for a kitchen, bedroom or bathroom, £20 (set of two different sizes), Dickins & Jones at House of Fraser



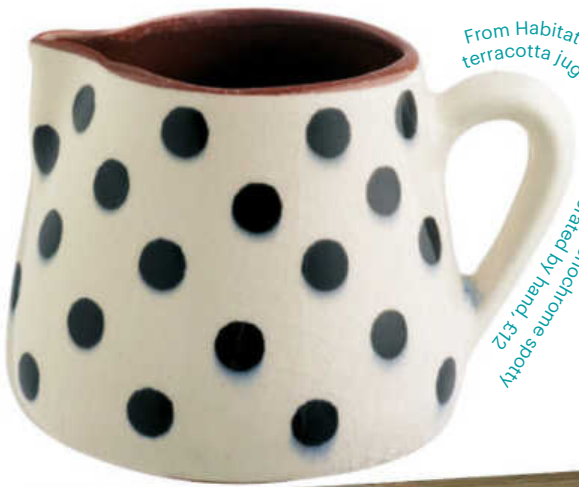
Sit in style on this sustainable acacia-wood and painted iron-framed retro-style bench (H75cm x W165cm x D38cm), £350, Graham and Green

Practical and pretty, these floral wellies (made from 50 per cent natural rubber) will keep feet dry during April showers, £35, Seasalt



Make breakfast more fun with this handmade fabric egg cosy featuring a characterful machine-embroidered design, £12, Poppy Treffry





From Habitat's latest collection, this monochrome spotty terracotta jug has been decorated by hand. £12

Keep tools, gloves, twine and other gardening essentials to hand in this canvas and jute bag*. £18. Also available in red and in bespoke sizes, Carrier Company

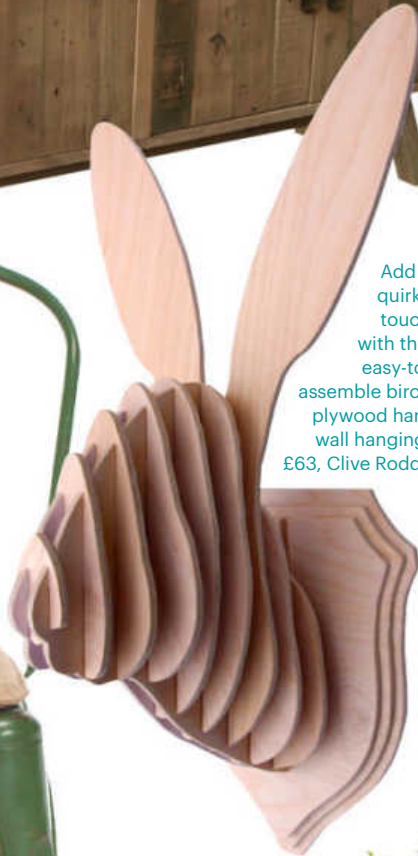


This rugged modern-rustic-style sideboard is made from reclaimed pine with a waxed finish, £647, The Orchard

Tamasyn Gambell's screen-printed, lined linen tote bags have sturdy leather handles and are available in two sizes in a range of bold abstract designs, from £40



Add a quirky touch with this easy-to-assemble birch plywood hare wall hanging, £63, Clive Roddy



Bring a mid-century element to a room with this classic Gustave metal chair. It comes in a range of colours, including green, orange and yellow, complete with a jute seat pad, £139, Barker and Stonehouse

This mini crate planter (29cm x 12cm x 8cm) can be personalised and painted in a choice of ten colours, from £14.95, Plantabox



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Zoe Glencross creates a range of beautifully printed linen fabrics and lampshades in subtle hues and pared-back patterns, including the one shown here, £60

Sophie Buckingham makes stylish enamelled-copper jewellery, such as this Lost & Found necklace, £38, in her garden studio in Wales



This made-to-order print on cotton paper shows a pictorial alphabet of edible flowers originally hand-painted by Charlotte Day, from £65 (unframed)



COMPILED BY ALAINA BINKS PHOTOGRAPH BY HEARST STUDIOS. PRICES AND AVAILABILITY CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

Keep homebaked treats fresh in this set of three nesting cake tins, £29.95, Joules



The design on this pretty cushion is inspired by the flowers in the kitchen garden at Barrington Court in Somerset, £25, National Trust shop



Crocheted sheep add delightful detail to this cardigan, available in sizes 0-4 years, from £27.50, Boden



Twin-bell alarm clock with a matt metal case in a choice of light blue or pale pink, £20, Newgate

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THE JOYS OF *spring*



Welcome the new season by throwing an Easter party filled with ideas and decorations that burst with colour and cheer

WORDS, STYLING AND PROJECTS BY CHRIS MYERS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY CATHERINE GRATWICKE



Turn to page 24 for how to make our Easter table centrepiece



BAKING TIN FLOWER DISPLAYS

Use old metal cake tins to create a miniature garden of flowering spring bulbs.

- 1 Place a layer of gravel in the base of each tin.
- 2 Plant up with potted bulbs and top with moss. Varieties of miniature narcissus work well, as do pansies, violas, primulas and muscari.
- 3 Keep well-watered indoors in a cool, light spot.

Vintage baking tins, from a selection, antiques markets ➔

POTTED PRESENTS

A little container of *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-Tête' makes a lovely gift for your guests.

- 1 Buy ready-potted narcissus that are already in flower.
- 2 Cut out large squares of jolly gingham fabric to wrap around the pots. Tear off a thin strip to use as ribbon.
- 3 Place the pots in the centre of each fabric square. Gather the edges together to envelop the pot, then tie the fabric ribbon around the middle to secure.

Potted narcissus, from a selection, florists. Gingham cotton, £3/m, John Lewis ➔





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EASTER EGG TEA LIGHTS

A simple decoration adds warm candlelight to the table.

- 1 Fill a small pudding bowl with moss.
- 2 Place a tiny terracotta flowerpot in the centre in which to hold a tea light.
- 3 Arrange some decorative or chocolate eggs on the moss around the flowerpot.

Old pudding bowls, from a selection, antiques markets.

Moss, £2 per bag, florists.

Easter eggs, from a selection, Waitrose. Lidded drinking jars, coloured mini milk bottles and straws, all from a selection, Pipii

VINTAGE POSTCARD WREATH

This indoor wreath is easy to make – use a twig or dried vine design as a base. Look for old or new vintage-style cards with an Easter theme.

- 1 Use thin silver wire to make holes carefully in the edges of the cards and attach them onto the wreath base.
- 2 Wire on a wooden Easter

decoration in between each card.

- 3 Tie a coarse, open-weave hessian ribbon at the top. Vine wreath, £4.99; silver wire, £2.99: both Hobbycraft.

Wooden Easter decorations, from a selection, Pipii. Vintage Easter postcards, from a selection, antiques markets. Cards, from a selection, Amazon

EASTER GOODIE BUNDLES

Children will enjoy using these little bags tied to poles instead of baskets for an egg hunt.

- 1 Gather the four corners of a bandana and tie using several ribbons. This creates gaps where the eggs can be placed.
- 2 Cut a small sloping notch in the cane 5cm from the top using a Stanley knife. Tie the bag around the cane at this point, to stop it slipping down.

Bamboo sticks, from a selection, garden centres. Bandanas, from a selection, Amazon. Ribbons, from a selection, Jane Means



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EASTER TABLE CENTREPIECE

A display of blossoming branches adds a seasonal note to an Easter meal.

- 1 In two zinc containers, press in some florist's foam and fill with water.
- 2 Arrange some moss on top and stick in some small forsythia branches.
- 3 Run linen string between the two containers and peg on decorative eggs with thin gingham ribbon.
- 4 Display on your table so the string runs down the centre.

Zinc bulb containers, £6 each; florist's foam, £1.50 per brick; moss, £2 per bag: all florists. Tiny pegs, £1.20 (50); jute twine, £2.49/roll: both Hobbycraft. Wooden eggs, from a selection, Pipii. Ribbon, from a selection, Jane Means. China, from a selection, Emma Bridgewater

linen, cotton or felt fabric, suitable for the background.

- 2 Choose a colourful or patterned fabric for the letters. Draw them out in reverse on the back of the fabric, then cut out.
- 3 Trace all the letters onto bonding web and cut out.
- 4 Iron them onto the bunting.
- 5 Using embroidery thread, sew a running stitch around each letter, then sew two triangles together with the letter inside, leaving the top edge open. Turn right side out. Repeat.
- 6 Lay the triangles out in the right order, then sew onto the bias-binding tape, along the top edge. Iron, then hang.

Linen sheet, from a selection, Beyond France. Fabrics and threads, from a selection; bonding web, £4/m; bias binding, £3.99: all John Lewis

SPRING BUNTING

This immediately creates a celebratory feel.

- 1 Cut 26 triangles of equal size (adding a seam allowance) from a plain

FLORAL ARRANGEMENT

Brighten up a room with beautiful spring blooms.

- 1 Find bottles to fit a wooden crate, then place a flower or branch in each one. ➔

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GLASS JAR TREATS

Recycle attractive jars to hold chocolate eggs for a fun gift.

- 1 Use a glue gun to attach a small wooden decoration to the lid of each jar.
- 2 Fill with a selection of chocolate eggs and finish with a jaunty ribbon.

Glass jars, from a selection, Lakeland. Ribbon, from a selection, Jane Means 



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RABBIT TAGS

These are ideal for presents, place-name holders or decorative food picks.

- 1 Cut out a silhouette of a rabbit using a cookie cutter or a piece of card as a template and glue it onto a luggage tag.
- 2 Repeat with a second tag. Insert a toothpick between the tags and glue together.
- 3 Tie a small bow of linen string to the top.

Tags, from a selection, Pipil. Twine, £2.49/roll, Hobbycraft.

Wrapping paper, from a selection, Jane Means. Cocktail sticks, £1.25, Waitrose.

For stockists, see *Where to Buy*

CHRIS MYERS



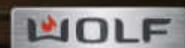
Chris runs courses and craft fairs from her home in Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. For more information, visit thecozyclub.co.uk.



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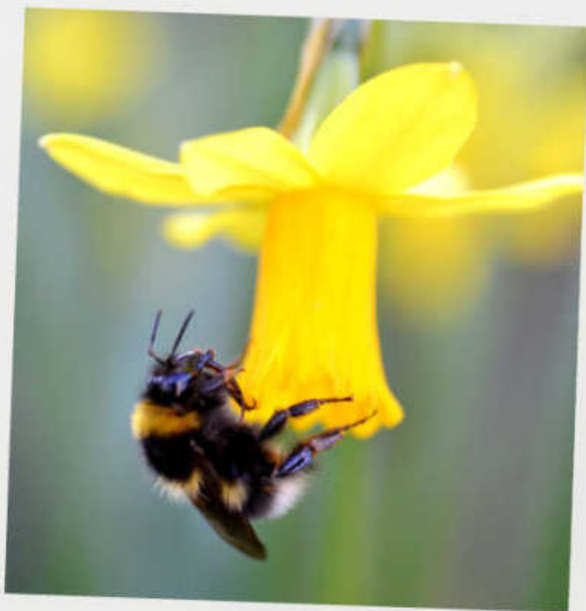
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A Month in the Country

WHAT TO SEE *April*



LOOK OUT FOR THE FIRST BUMBLEBEES

On warm spring days, you may spot one of these winged foragers busily buzzing round crocuses and daffodils. They will be queens that have survived the winter and are now searching for pollen and nectar for the nest. Although all bumblebees are characterised by a fuzzy exterior and deep buzz, take a closer look and you'll notice some subtle differences. There are 24 species in the UK, including white-tailed, buff-tailed, garden and tree bumblebees. Sadly, their numbers are in decline due to changes in farming practices, but things are starting to look up for these expert pollinators, known previously as 'humblebees' or 'dumbledores' as some farmers are now introducing more bee-friendly farming methods, such as setting aside areas for wild flowers. You can help, too, by making your garden a welcoming environment for them. Ensure there are flowers in bloom from early spring to late summer in order to supply pollen and nectar from nest-building time to fattening up for winter hibernation. Visit bumblebeeconservation.org for more information.

COMPILED BY KATE LANGRISH AND CHARLOTTE DEAR



DOWN ON THE FARM

Helen Browning reveals what is taking place on her mixed organic holding in Wiltshire

APRIL IS THE TRADITIONAL MONTH for lambing and my daughter's flock of Romneys are timed to lamb during her holiday from vet school. As an 'easy care' breed, they give birth outside, and as they were scanned during pregnancy, we know how many are due. Those having twins or more go onto the best grass, so they can eat

enough to sustain the extra milk they will need to make. Lambing is exhausting and exhilarating. Every day brings new challenges but seeing lambs out at grass with their mothers is so rewarding. We are also drilling grass seeds and pulse crops, which will be the main source of protein next winter for our cows. And, with muck spreading and



barn cleaning to do, April is never dull!

For more about Helen's farm, see helenbrowningsof.org.uk.



IN NATURE

Naturalist Simon King offers tips about the flora and fauna you will see in your garden

JUST OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOW, battles are now raging. Territories are being fought over and, for the most part, the weapon of choice is song. Bird song, however sweet to our ears, is a declaration of intent – for both love and war. The crooners tend to be males staking their claim to nesting territories and mates. Listen for the sequence of voices joining the

chorus starting from well before sunrise, often with a robin whose high, rambling whistles sound like liquid silver in the half light. Song thrushes may join next, repeating each phrase two or three times, and they are soon followed by the master songster, the blackbird. No other sound in nature has its tonal richness or flutey warmth. Its cessation marks the end of



summer, so revel in its loveliness while you can. *To learn about Simon's work, visit simonkingwildlife.com.*

SLOW SUNDAY

Why not set aside one day each week to savour the simple pleasures in life?



EMBRACE THE SPRING CLEAN

Throw the windows wide and let the crisp, fresh air flood into your home – spring cleaning is good for your health and your soul. Dust mites thrive in warm, humid conditions, so opening windows will ventilate rooms and reduce humidity. Vacuuming carpets and mattresses helps remove the dust they feed on, while airing curtains and rugs on a washing line will do the same. Clearing clutter is very satisfying and the process is even more enjoyable if using natural cleaning agents. Try white wine vinegar on worksurfaces – dilute with water and add a few drops of lavender oil for its antibacterial action and calming scent. And avoid synthetic air fresheners in favour of a pot of narcissi on a windowsill. For more natural household hints, read *Forgotten Ways for Modern Days* by Rachelle Blondel (Kyle Books, £14.99) or *The Organically Clean Home* by Becky Rapinchuk (Adams Media, £10.99).



COLLECT DANDELIONS AND NETTLES

Fresh young dandelion leaves make a delicious and healthy addition to salads, while nettles (wear gloves to pick them!), particularly the tender tops, make the perfect iron-rich soup.



ENJOY WET WEATHER

Make the most of April showers by donning waterproofs and wellies and enjoying a walk splashing through the puddles.



A SIMPLE PROJECT:

PAINTED KITCHEN HERB PLANTERS

Stylish containers for growing ingredients

- 1 Select suitable terracotta pots – make sure their sides are smooth and free of dirt.
- 2 Choose two shades of paint for your pots in an emulsion or eggshell finish.
- 3 Mask off the top section of the pot and, using a small brush, paint the unmasked area including the base. Once the paint has dried, apply a second coat.
- 4 After the second coat has dried completely, remove the tape and carefully mask off the painted area.
- 5 Paint the unpainted section with the other shade. Once dry, apply a second layer.
- 6 Gently remove the tape when the final coat has dried.
- 7 Fill with your chosen herbs.

Project by Clementene Coates (clementenecoates.co.uk).

3

COURSES... IN GLASSBLOWING

- 1 **Five-day Spring School** The Glass Hub, Stoward Manor Farm, Wiltshire Produce beautiful glassware in this beginner's course, which includes a range of techniques from blowing to bead making. 25-29 April 2016; £620 (01225 768888, theglasshub.co.uk).
- 2 **Glassblowing Beginner Lessons** Stuart Wiltshire Hand Blown Glass, Weymouth, Dorset Join expert Stuart Wiltshire for a one-to-one lesson, and create a piece of studio glass to take home. Classes Monday to Friday in April; £40 (01305 766037, stuartwiltshireglass.co.uk).
- 3 **One-Day Glassblowing Course** Creative Vibe Glassblowing Studio, Ampthill, Bedfordshire Learn how to use different tools, gather molten glass from the furnace and make your own masterpiece. 18 and 28 April 2016; £150 (07786 182052; keechcreations.com).

SLOW SUNDAY WORDS BY KATE LANGRISH. SIMPLE PROJECT: TERRACOTTA PLANT POTS, IKEA (IKEA.COM). MASKING TAPE, HOMEWARES (HOMEWARES.CO.UK). ANNIE'S SLOAN CHALK PAINT (ANNIESLOAN.COM). RUB'N'BUFF GOLD-LEAF GILDING WAX, AMAZON (AMAZON.CO.UK)



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MEET A COUNTRY CHARACTER



Apprentice bee farmer Rebecca Marshall has been helping her father on the family farm in rural north Buckinghamshire since the age of 19. She soon discovered that apiculture was in her blood and, after completing a three-year apprenticeship run by the Bee Farmers Association (launched to address a worrying decline in young beekeepers), she is now back on the farm. Although also involved in the pollination and honey production sides of the business, Rebecca's main role is to raise queen bees; hives must be re-queened every one to two years as older queens begin to produce unfertilised eggs. She starts the process this month by 'grafting' daily – transferring worker larvae from their cells into artificial cups where they will be reared into queens, which, once mated, will each lay up to 2,000 eggs a day.

Rebecca's queens are destined for her farm and customers round the UK. "The queen bee sets the temperament and performance of the entire colony," she explains. "You want easy-to-manage bees that are less likely to swarm." She hopes the apprenticeship scheme will encourage more young people to help "keep British honey on the supermarket shelves".

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Sarn

Welsh place name meaning 'causeway', as in Sarn Badrig at Cardigan Bay on the west coast of Wales.*



NEWS YOU CAN USE

SHAKESPEARE'S ANNIVERSARY

No matter how distant the memory might now be, every one of us can recall studying Shakespeare at some point in our education. This year marks 400 years of our most iconic poet, playwright and actor, who was born on 23 April 1564 and died on the same date in 1616. To celebrate, Shakespeare's England, the official tourism guide for his home town of Stratford-upon-Avon, invites you to walk in the footsteps of the famous wordsmith at New Place, his residence for the last 19 years of his life, which will be displaying 26 major works written during his time there. Visit the Warwickshire town on 23 and 24 April to join in the annual birthday celebrations, as actors, foreign diplomats, civic dignitaries and local children take to the streets in a 1,000-strong procession. If you can't make the journey, a magical production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will tour the UK from February to June, marking this special milestone in every corner of Shakespeare's beloved Britain. For more information, visit rsc.org.uk.



ECO TIP

Give your plants some extra nutrients by saving cooled vegetable water after cooking.

FROM YOUR ARMCHAIR



Get to grips with your greens using this Riverford Companion guide to seasonal veg-box feasts. Guy Watson offers inspiring recipes to increase your confidence preparing meat-free meals**.

5 BEST BRIDGES FOR POOH STICKS

3 For splashing Rectory Lane Bridge and Ford, Shere, Surrey Wade through the ford in wellies, then stroll downstream to feed the ducks (sheredelight.com).

1 For legendary status Pooh Bridge, Ashdown Forest, East Sussex Challenge opponents at the place that inspired Pooh Bear's pastime (ashdownforest.org).

4 For village life Sheepwash Bridge, Ashford in the Water, Derbyshire See the pen where, until two decades ago, local sheep were washed before being sheared (visitpeakdistrict.com).

2 For history Carrog Bridge, Denbighshire Revel in the heritage of this impressive 1660 stone structure, which spans the River Dee (visitwales.com).

5 For tranquillity 'Pooh Sticks Bridge', Winterborne Zelston, Dorset Flanked by a willow, a plaque on the bridge sets out the 'rules' of the game (visit-dorset.com).

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CLOCKWISE, FROM FAR LEFT The Stade with the Hastings fishing fleet; one of the rooms at Swan House; the East Hill Lift saves visitors a steep walk up to Hastings Country Park; enjoy modern art at the Jerwood Gallery; the menu at The Crown features seasonal and local ingredients

FURTHER AFIELD



Take the **East Hill Lift** (above), one of Hastings's two funicular railways, up to **Hastings Country Park**. From there, enjoy views of the Old Town and Stade before a clifftop walk along the three miles of coastline, or explore 852 acres of beautiful wild heath and grassland. Head in the other direction and travel in the original wooden coaches of the **West Hill Lift** up to the ruins of **Hastings Castle**, a Norman construction built on the orders of William of Normandy shortly after landing in England.



A NIGHT AND A DAY... HASTINGS OLD TOWN

Stay...

in a room with a view of the ancient church of St Clements or the pretty courtyard garden at Swan House, a 15th-century cottage that makes the perfect base for exploring Hastings Old Town. Beamed rooms have walls hand-painted by a local artist, creating a quirky boutique feel – even down to the honesty bar in the mock bookcase. Try the kippers for breakfast – sourced from Peter Eastern fish shop in town – followed by toast with strawberry and pomegranate jam produced in the area by Preserves of Hastings. *Double B&B from £120 per room (01424 430014; swanhousehastings.co.uk).*

Eat...

at The Crown, a friendly, buzzy independent pub on characterful All Saints Street that serves up delicious lunches and brunches using local, seasonal ingredients, or sample the seafood at The Old Custom House on the seafront. Enjoy homemade cakes in Petit Fi on George Street or settle down on a sofa with a coffee and one of the many books lining the shelves of Hanushka Coffee House. If you've taken in an exhibition in the wonderful Jerwood Gallery, make sure you also stop for lunch in Webbe's at Jerwood, and enjoy a meal featuring fish landed by the fleet that launches just metres from the gallery site.

Browse...

the plethora of antiques and junk shops that dot the steep, winding streets. Vintage-lovers will be in their element searching for treasures in Robert's Rummage on the High Street, and A G Hendy & Co Home Store is like walking into an emporium from days gone by – packed with Victorian pharmacy bottles, glass domes, display cases and old-fashioned hardware. Made in Hastings makes full use of the town's creative residents and stocks pottery, painting, knitwear and other crafts by local artists. Head down to The Stade (the beachfront), where you can pick up the catch of the day.



LOCAL LANDMARK

The tall, black-tarred wooden 'net shops' on the beach are where fishermen used to dry and store their nets and ropes ➔

Don't miss

The Jack in the Green (30 April-10 May), a festival of Morris and traditional dancing, culminating in a colourful procession through the town and the crowning of the May Queen

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Originally built as a farmhouse before being extended in order to become the Dower House for the Elvingstone estate, 18th-century Woodside is located three miles west of the popular East Lothian town of Haddington. Constructed of harled stone and slate, the property is listed Category B by Historic Scotland in recognition of its architectural importance and features overhanging eaves, decorative barge boarding and a castellated dovecote.

A central hall with woodburning stove and stone staircase leads to the main reception rooms, which include a drawing room with a bay window, open fireplace and double doors to the library. The dining room's French windows open onto manicured lawns while the kitchen has characterful sash windows, an oil-fired four-oven Aga and an adjoining larder and utility room.

Upstairs, a large landing with south-facing seating area leads to a family bathroom and three bedrooms, two of which have built-in beds and window shutters. A short staircase rises to a guest bedroom and the master bedroom, with its open fireplace and views over the lawns.

Woodside is set in 23 acres of gardens, paddocks and woodland. The large lawn is flanked by hedges and mature trees and stretches down to a 19th-century folly, an orchard and duck pond. Also on the estate, there is a tennis court, well, kitchen garden, courtyard and selection of outbuildings. 

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COUNTRY LOVING

Our new columnist Imogen Green, a farmer in Devon, explores the unfamiliar terrain of rural dating

YESTERDAY WAS MY FIRST BLIND DATE. I was so anxious during evening milking that I hardly listened as my sister-in-law, Susie, complained about how the feed store had been broken into, and cattle-cake stolen. Obviously the prime suspect was a cow.

I guessed it might be a three-year-old Jersey, so mischievous and characterful that she's earned a pet name, Mollie, rather than a number like the rest. If you take a cup of tea into the milking parlour, she will wait until your back's turned and then creep up and drink it. But she's so pretty, with her long black eyelashes, that everyone forgives her. As I ran up to my bedroom, I remembered seeing her nudge the yard gate repeatedly with her nose as if trying to open it – but she got nowhere because the bolt held firm.

"Could you help me choose my outfit please?" I asked my beautiful daughter, Ava, home from uni for Easter. "What do you want to look like?" she asked irritably – everything I do provokes her. "Ideally slimmer, and younger than 48."

She squeezed me into a pencil skirt, high heels and one of her riding jackets. "You'd better not eat anything," she said, looking at the straining buttons and frowning.

At least the acute discomfort distracted me while I drove. "It's only half an hour," my friend (and dating expert) Rachel had said. "And if it gets really bad, you can always escape through the toilet window." She'd gone through all the replies to my dating profile, ruthlessly deleting anyone whose photos showed them holding up a fish (a surprising number) or posing with their top off. I'd chosen my date from the remainder because his clean-cut face reminded me of my late husband, but it was a shock to meet him in person in the pub. Not just because my first thought was 'No', but because he had an enormous ginger beard.

While we sorted out drinks (mine was a ginger beer, because the barman had taken my startled exclamation for an order), I kept wondering, 'Why didn't he mention the beard? What else is he hiding?' It turned out the explosion of hair was his response to a painful divorce, and the dismal stories he told about his wife only reminded me how lucky I'd been with Ted. Certain there wasn't going to be a second date, I changed the subject and asked if he thought a cow could close and open bolts. "Of course!" he said. "Haven't you seen Daisy from County Armagh on YouTube?"

Anxious now, I drove home, but it was too late. As I turned into the yard, I saw the gate was wide open. The cows that had been inside had thoughtfully left a trail, and I followed them through the village and up to a white house with a 'Sold' board in the hedge. Its front garden was a rippling mass of excited animals. When the cows saw me, they fled round a path and

across a lawn, kicking up turf. Lights came on in the house, and I stumbled back to the front in my heels, firing off buttons, and almost collided with a man in a suit. "What's going on?" he shouted, his voice nearly drowned out by mooing and the crackle of trampled shrubs. "How many of those bloody things are there?"

"This is only the main herd – 98 – we've got 261 altogether." I couldn't help a tinge of pride creeping into my voice.


He turned, and I noticed what very dark eyes he had. "So what's your name?" he asked. It seemed an odd moment to flirt, but he did have an attractive, if well-worn, face – and I was in dating mode.

"Imogen." I smiled.

"Your full name. And your insurers'."

"Oh. Imogen Green. NFU. And I'm really sorry about this."

"You will be," he said, with grim humour.

As I got the cows home, and wound wire round every gate Mollie could reach, I wondered why it was that on meeting a hostile and vengeful stranger, my first reaction had been to think: 'Yes.' 



Are you looking for a partner who shares your love of the countryside? If so, you're not alone – there are hundreds of people just like you. Meet them at country-loving.co.uk.

'Woman seeks clean-shaven stranger who's not into fishing'



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In our series celebrating home-grown skills, we meet women making the most of their hobby, whether they're earning from their kitchen table or launching a fully fledged business. Plus discover different ways to follow in their footsteps

WORDS BY KERRY FOWLER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALUN CALLENDER

THIS MONTH: THE BOOK LOVER



THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE
Sarah turned her passion for reading books into an interesting career by creating a unique

bookshop on her narrowboat – she now uses it to host book groups and readings, which are enjoyed by locals

There is a lulling sense of calm when you step inside a canal boat. As visitors to Sarah Henshaw's waterside shop, The Book Barge in Barton-under-Needwood, Staffordshire, know, it makes the perfect place for reflection and reading. Enter this pretty narrowboat, pick a book off the shelves, enjoy a piece of cherry cake, sit back and escape into words and other worlds as the busy stuff of life drifts away.

It's eight years since Sarah gave up her job as an entertainment journalist in London and pursued the dream of running her own floating bookshop. She says: "The turning point came in the middle of an interview with a Hollywood star. 'I hope you don't mind,' he apologised, 'but I'm very tired. I'm going to stretch out on the floor for a few minutes and nap. We'll resume when I wake up.' With that, he pushed his chair aside and adopted a foetal position by my handbag. I squirmed awkwardly for several minutes, not sure what to do. 'Oh, I would read your book,' his assistant said helpfully. I didn't need further encouragement. It was that moment when I realised that reading books was so much more enjoyable than meeting celebs."

Growing up in South Africa and then Lichfield, Staffordshire, she had soaked up Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl and every boarding-school book ever printed: "I had never really enjoyed London life, so when I left the media, I took off and travelled for a while and immersed myself in my love of books before coming back to Lichfield to find a job." But this was 2008, the recession had kicked in and work was scarce. After a trip to the then undeveloped Barton Marina – it is now a thriving little enclave, complete





with restaurant, deli, clothes shops and a community of boat-dwellers – she had a brainwave and began to formulate a plan for the future. “I imagined how wonderful it would be to have a bookshop on a barge,” says Sarah, who has a degree in literature. “I went to the bank first but they didn’t understand the concept. Fortunately, my parents really liked the idea and put up the money: my boat, *Joseph*, cost £26,000 and needed work but was generally in pretty good shape.”

Her experience of canal boats at this point consisted of one very cramped holiday on the Norfolk Broads when she was young with several generations of her family and a dog, plus she had never run a shop before. However, her determination carried her through, and with her carpenter boyfriend, Stu, helping to turn the barge from a living-on-board boat to a bookshop, complete with bespoke handmade shelving, they were good to go: “We bought the boat in February 2009 and opened four months later. I always wanted to stock both new and secondhand – I love being able to rummage for old books but pick up the very latest, too.”

With little spare cash – “When we opened, there were only ten books arranged artfully on the shelves!” – Sarah bought from book fairs and placed an appeal in the local paper for donations. Touched by the support she received, she realised that she wasn’t afraid to ask for help, which was to set her in good stead later on.

Sarah has nothing but praise for the book wholesalers she worked with, accommodating her small orders and delivering to

MORE WAYS TO TURN A LITERARY TALENT INTO TURNOVER



PUBLISH FROM HOME

Jenny Swann set up Candlestick Press more than seven years ago, producing covetable pamphlets of themed poetry that can also be used as gift cards. “I had been working as an editor, picking poets for a series of pamphlets, and fell in love with the form: it just seemed perfect for poetry. I realised that a lot of people don’t know their way around poems – there isn’t a grapevine as there is with films and books – so I decided to set up a business from home, producing lovely little booklets. My mother had left me a bit of money, so we used that to turn the utility room into my office, found a local printer and created the website. I always thought you needed to be a millionaire to set up your own publishing house, but you don’t, you just need to have a vision. I absolutely love poetry, and now I have the opportunity to share what I love with other people. It is like cooking a dinner for a couple of thousand friends.” (candlestickpress.co.uk)



BECOME A CHILDREN’S AUTHOR

Catherine Barr worked for Greenpeace, the Natural History Museum and a design agency before writing her first books for children in 2015: *The Story of Life: A First Book About Evolution* (£12.99), and *Elliot’s Arctic Surprise* (£11.99, both Frances Lincoln).

“I first trained as a journalist and then as an editor.

I had always written, but it never occurred to me to write a book. When we moved to Hay-on-Wye ten years ago, my two children came home from school one day talking about the creation story. I wanted to tell them about evolution but couldn’t find a book on the subject. I met the local school’s biology teacher, and we decided to write the book together. It is now in its fifth print run. I then wrote *Elliot’s Arctic Surprise* about climate change and a little boy saving Father Christmas’s home. My aim is to stimulate discussions between parents and children. I am 50 now, and suddenly there is a whole world of possibilities.”



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THIS PAGE Together with Napoleon, her rabbit, Sarah has taken her boat along

canals all over the country, using the moorings to connect with customers

her outpost: "For six months, I was making money and, in fact, did better than I'd thought. It was so different to anything I'd ever done and really liberating." Then things took a nose-dive: "I struggled with competition from the bookshop in the village. Plus all the independents were suffering at this point due to online purchasing. I began to worry about how I could make it work."

It was at this point that Sarah decided to take the boat off around the country – London, Bath, Bristol, Manchester and villages in between – and run a roving business for six months, selling but also bartering books in exchange for showers, moorings and occasionally Victoria sponges from people she met canalside or connected with on social media: "I knew if I stayed I'd have to close. I had split up with Stu at the time and was running away but it turned out to be the best thing to do." From a tearful test run on the marina, Sarah soon developed her barge skills. By the end of her tour – 1,079 miles and 707 locks – she'd mastered not just the tiller and the ways of the canals, but made some discoveries about herself: "It took me out of my comfort zone, which is healthy. I appreciate things more." She had also acquired a water-faring rabbit, Napoleon, as her onboard companion.

At the end of her odyssey, more confident and wiser, Sarah returned to the marina, was reunited with Stu and turned the barge into a dual-purpose space: her home and bookshop. The crucial change, though, was accepting that she needed both the company of other people and a steady income, so she now writes during the week for a waterways magazine and opens the shop at weekends. "It is never going to be my sole income, but it ticks over and offers me a nice lifestyle. I have a small group of loyal customers." One of these is Graeme Bowers, who attends



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Sarah's onboard book-group sessions. "It's not like going into a shop," he says. "You can sit down and have a proper chat."

The couple, though, are looking forward to a change of scene. They have bought a small place in France and plan to take *Joseph* with them across the Channel and set up a bookshop on the canal near their new home. Sarah has written a book about her experience, *The Bookshop That Floated Away* (Constable, £7.99), and says she cannot imagine giving up on the project that has brought so much variety and challenge into her life.

"I have always loved it when children come aboard to choose a book or give Napoleon a pat," she concludes. "I heard one little boy say to his dad that the shop was the most unexpected thing in the universe..." 

i For more details of Sarah's shop, visit thebookbarge.com. To read Fiona Davies' tips and advice for opening your own bookshop, go to countryliving.co.uk.

If you like books, you'll love the **Hay Festival**, regarded as the world's leading literary event. From 26 May to 5 June 2016, Hay-on-Wye will play host to an exciting line-up of renowned writers, actors and speakers. Join us for two special *Country Living* events on Wednesday 1 and Thursday 2 June – for more details and booking information, visit countryliving.co.uk.

JOIN OUR BUSINESS NETWORK!



Country Living is one of 19 major national titles published by Hearst UK. We are proud of the fact that through our magazines we speak to an amazing one in three British women. In order to give something back to these readers, we have collectively launched Hearst Empowering Women (HEW), an initiative aimed at offering them the confidence and knowledge to bring about change in their lives and in society.

THE KITCHEN TABLE TALENT NETWORK

Country Living has always taken pride in providing support to women in business and, as part of HEW, we are introducing the Kitchen Table Talent Network. Through this, we will be giving inspiration, resources and encouragement to women who have taken control of their careers and started a business based on their own kitchen-table talent. It will include events such as the Pop-up Market and Business Zone at the *Country Living* Spring Fair as well as our new Build-a-Business Day, where you can hear talks and get involved in workshops with business experts (read more about this on page 52).

MEET YOUR BUSINESS MENTOR

As part of the KTT Network, we will also be revealing a brand-new business-mentoring scheme through which we will be pairing up experienced business owners (like the ones who appear in *Country Living*) with those who are just starting out or hoping to do so.

To apply to take part in our business network, read inspiring Q&As with our business mentors and find out more about Hearst Empowering Women and the KTT Network, go to countryliving.co.uk or search #showmethewoman on Twitter.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES



COLOURS OF GUDRUN

Our extra collection for spring is out now - with inspiration from butterflies and flowers. Colourful, functional, comfortable and sustainable garments - and naturally, nice-looking too. Clothes that accentuate the personality of the wearer, and which not only make the world greener, but more pleasant too.

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NEW!
Come to our

Build-a-Business Day

Join us in central London for this exclusive event and learn all you need to know to start and develop your dream business



FOLLOWING THE HUGE SUCCESS of our Build-a-Business Days at the Country Living Spring Fairs, we are launching a new event on 11 May 2016 at the prestigious Good Housekeeping Institute. Whether you're at the daydreaming stage, just starting out or hoping to develop an idea, you can find out all you need to know to run a successful business from industry experts and entrepreneurs. We look forward to seeing you there!

- **9.30am onwards** Arrival and registration
- **10am** Welcome from *Country Living* editor-in-chief Susy Smith
- **10.10am Talk: Why There's Never Been a Better Time To Start Your Dream Business** Fiona Davies, business manager from Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE), offers advice for taking the first steps.
- **10.40am Workshop: Defining Your Brand** Identify your USP and plan a strategy to launch or grow your business.
- **11.10am Workshop: Demystifying the Business Plan** Discover how to simplify this integral step to starting out.
- **11.40am Coffee break**
- **12pm Talk: What I Wish I'd Known** Sophie Conran, the successful designer, cook and author, offers valuable tips and advice based on her own experiences. Followed by Q&A.
- **12.45pm Lunch**
- **1.30pm Workshop: How To Get Your Product into *Country Living*** Learn how to refine your pitch for editorial mention. Followed by the chance to present your product direct to one of our magazine editors.
- **2.30pm Workshop: An Idiot's Guide To Social Media** Discover how to master social media to promote your business to a global audience.
- **3.15pm Afternoon tea**
- **3.45pm Talk: Have the Confidence to Make the Leap with Emma Bridgewater** The iconic British designer and author shares how looking for a birthday present for her mother led to her becoming a household name.
- **4.30pm Goodbye and close**

MEET THE EXPERTS



EMMA BRIDGEWATER's cheerfully distinctive, British-made kitchenware has found its way onto the shelves and tables of homes all over Britain and beyond. As well as running the company with her husband Matthew, Emma published her first book, *Toast and Marmalade*, in 2014; her second, *Pattern*, is available from 25 February.



Daughter of Sir Terence Conran, designer, cook and author **SOPHIE CONRAN** is known as much for her stylish and functional kitchenware and tableware as she is for her collection of recipe books.



At the age of 50, artisan designer and CL talent ambassador **JULIE DODSWORTH** decided to turn her painting hobby into a range of licensed homeware, which is sold in more than 500 shops in 20 countries.



FIONA DAVIES trained in sales and marketing before joining Harper Adams University on a farm diversification project, which led to the formation of WiRE (Women in Rural Enterprise). She is now its business manager.



After starting a family, **PAULA HUTCHINGS** left the corporate world to set up her own business, Marketing Vision Consultancy. She now shares the marketing experience she gained working for international companies with small-business owners.

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GREEN-FINGERED PRINTS



"I love to potter in the garden, and my wall paint in the hall makes sure my green fingers only leave their mark where they're meant to"
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Colour your home

From tranquil seaside blues and energising garden greens to uplifting yellows and the vibrant petal-pinks and reds of a high-summer flower border, discover how clever use of colour can transform a room

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANE CUMBERBATCH



Interiors expert and author Jane Cumberbatch is described as 'the queen of simple' for her pared-back, pure design ethos. Her unique style is based on using natural materials to create a relaxed feel and she often takes inspiration for colour schemes from the British countryside, as well as from her rustic house in Portugal. Her most recent book, *Pure Colour*, is a visual notebook of her ideas (see offer on page 62).



Lemon Curd Recipe
 2 eggs yolks
 20g/2oz 1/4 stick butter
 50g/1oz 1/2 granulated sugar
 all ingredients in a heatproof bowl over a simmering water bath until the sugar has dissolved
 continue heating gently while stirring for about 20 minutes until the curd is thick enough to coat the back of a wooden spoon when cooled
 spoon into jars - that have been sterilised - keep in fridge for up to 3 weeks

4/6
 Summer Cooking contains over a thousand recipes from all over the world - for table, buffet, or picnic. Elizabeth David is well known for the infectious enthusiasm with which she has handled French, Italian, and Mediterranean cooking; she imparts the same quality to this selection of summer dishes that are light but necessarily varied, easy to prepare, and based on the best and vegetables in season.
 Demonstrating how an unconventional use of herbs can lend interest to the simplest meal, the author describes some forty ways of cooking, for example, with the familiar egg, from the Provencal sautéed to the Marseillaise, a recipe from the seventeenth century. She is no less resourceful in her chapters on hors d'oeuvre, summer salads, fish and meat of various kinds, vegetables, soups, and sweets.
 Summer Cooking succeeds in bringing the cool, fresh flavour of garden, fields, and sea into the kitchen and dining room.
 Cover photograph by Anthony Denney



endive
 violet





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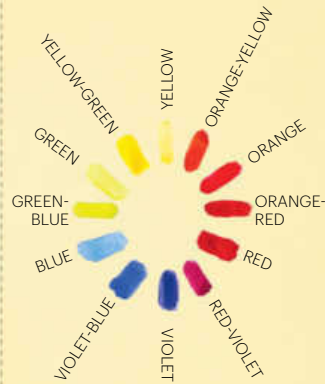
6

YELLOW Saffron, quince and summer beaches

Yellow is such a vibrant, optimistic colour that you would expect it to be used more. But, as the lightest, brightest shade in the spectrum, it needs to be introduced carefully. Cool yellows, with hints of blue, are clear and luminous. Bright yellows are too distracting for tranquil areas such as bedrooms but are good for creating a sunny look in kitchens and dining rooms. Pale and blue-greys work well with cool yellows, and violets are the contrasting complementary colours. Warm yellows with red tones (in nasturtiums and the richer sunflowers) are welcoming. They have gentle, more golden hues, which are especially good in north-facing rooms, and look sunny even on a dark day. Rich ochre tones go well with lead grey, light brown, celadon green, lavender or grey-blue. A warm yellow is great for adding depth to a small room. If a dull shade is used with cold greys and blues, its true hue is accentuated, whereas alongside earthy colours it appears more neutral.

- 1 The bedroom in my house faces north and so it is where I escape the heat outside on a warm day, but when summer slides into cooler autumn it needs a cheery touch. A shot of yellow in the silk mustard dress hanging on the cupboard door is the perfect uplifting element.
- 2 A hint of contrasting bright pink makes the yellow of these hand-picked flowers really stand out.
- 3 Yellowcake by Farrow & Ball is a cool and intense paint colour. To get the full value of this strong unique shade, use it with white furniture and tableware, and shots of complementary violet and pink.
- 4 A door painted in Babouche yellow and walls in Plummert grey, both from Farrow & Ball, is one of my favourite colour pairings, as they balance each other perfectly.
- 5 These chairs, found at a local second-hand shop, have been updated using linen throws, in pale blue and mustard, hiding the past-their-prime covers with a stylish flourish.
- 6 Against a neutral wall, a simple tie-on headboard cover in yellow with contrasting pink pillowcases – both easy to run up on a sewing machine – create a surprising yet attractive focal point in a bedroom.
- 7 Farrow & Ball's Dayroom Yellow is a warm, buttery colour that's very good for making a small, dark attic room feel sunny and welcoming, even on gloomy days.

BASIC COLOUR THEORY



A colour wheel is like a visual map showing how different shades relate to each other, and how they can be used to contrast and harmonise.

● **Harmonious colours** These are tonal and sit beside one another on the colour wheel – for example, yellow and green or green and blue

● **Contrasting accent colours** These can be found opposite one another on the wheel – for example, yellow and violet

● **Colour discord** This is created by using colours that are widely separated on the wheel – for example, red-violet and orange. They can't be used in large amounts, but small touches add an exciting vibrancy



BLUE

Sea, sky and hyacinths



The general notion is that rooms decorated in blue will appear larger, as it has the effect of making spaces recede. The warm, dark shades lie towards the red part of the spectrum and the cooler blues towards green. Lighter warm blues can be used all over the house, and can also be mixed with limewash to decorate exterior walls and outdoor terraces in seaside settings, where the good light makes the colour more enriched and luminous. These blues work well with complementary oranges and greys, yellows, reds and lavender. Grey-blues or green-blues have light-enhancing qualities and are understated, so they can be partnered with contrasting splashes of pink, and natural wood and stone textures. These colours suit our northern climate.

1 Walls and vintage school cupboards painted in the same brilliant white, along with the floorboards, create a clean, uncluttered canvas that offers the perfect backdrop for a crisp, light and bright blue-and-white coastal scheme. The woven cotton ticking loose covers in neat stripes stand out, while a darker striped cushion on the armchair gives the whole look more impact.

2 The old wooden dresser in this north-facing room is painted in a quiet blue hue that echoes soft spring mornings. Blue-and-white china is a timeless choice – I pick up plates and bowls from here, there and everywhere, in charity shops and car-boot sales.

3 White-painted furniture helps to create a light and airy feel. Gathered catkins from a country walk and a bunch of sweet-scented blue hyacinths in a beautiful toning jug create an informal display on the table.

4 On a wet day in April it may seem impractical to have a white painted floor when everyone, including the cat, is leaving a mark. The boards here are painted with Flortred floor paint (from Johnstone's). It's incredibly tough and resists most of the dirt. When we moved house, the floors were in good condition, so all that was necessary was to sand, undercoat and finish with two top coats of this paint. It takes a couple of days to harden completely, as it is almost like an enamel.

5 Wall prints are easy to achieve using a sponge or potato halves cut into simple shapes to make stamps. Dip them in a water-based paint and create a pattern across the wall.

6 White becomes fresh and alive when contrasted with splashes of colour. The key feature of this bedroom is the padded headboard covered in a blue hand-block printed cotton.



GREEN Grass and garden cabbages

Rich grey-greens of olives or a field in winter are soothing, timeless and quiet, while hues at the light, bright end of the spectrum can be much bolder. The acidic lime green of hyacinth stalks in spring may not work when used on all the walls in a room but a splash on a cushion or a bowl of green apples can be visually appealing.

- 1 A soft green, with its feel of the vegetable garden, is a food-friendly background colour that enhances rather than detracts. In sunlight, the colour is light and fresh, and at night it takes on a richer tone. (Walls here are painted in Teresa's Green from Farrow & Ball.)
- 2 Use nature-inspired tones on pieces of furniture to update a white room.
- 3 Farrow & Ball's paint shade Arsenic is a bright but not overpowering green-blue. It works just as well in an English cottage as in the kitchen of a traditional whitewashed house on a Greek island.
- 4 This is Citrine, a strong tone that resonates with the earthy colours of the garden. The Little Greene paint chart notes that it was used in the 1950s and recommends it for a north-facing room teamed with a pale greeny-yellow and a chocolate brown. It also goes with sludgy blues and has enough yellow to keep it rich.
- 5 An updated approach to the avocado-coloured bathrooms of the 1970s, this rich olive green has a calm and relaxing feel. The exterior of the bath is painted with blackboard paint, which pushes it into the background and directs the eye towards the interior.





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RED & PINK Lipstick pinks and petals

These are powerful colours. Away from obvious primary-school poster-paint red and sugary pinks, there is something uplifting about a powdery Suffolk pink cottage, a jug of bright fuchsias or vivid pink roses. The brightest red is scarlet, without a trace of blue. If you are building up a colour scheme, the complementary shade for crimsons and carmines is a yellow-green. Splashes of crimson also go well with violet, yellow and orange. Deep red, the colour of rich apples, is bluer – with olive green, it is also good for dining rooms, and glows with extra warmth when lit by candlelight. Blue-reds also include fuchsia pink, a colour that works as a vibrant accent against backgrounds of green, blue or yellow.

- 1 Fuchsia pinks work exceptionally well with fresh green and crisp white.
- 2 A pink-striped paper border is a simple way to add colour and interest to a white wall. This handpainted border is from Pure Style.
- 3 There are many different tones of pink, ranging from pale salmon and pretty raspberry to rich and strong fuchsia. In the past, these shades were created by adding elderberries, dried blood or crumbled red earth to limewash. This soft pink, Nancy's Blushes by Farrow & Ball, is a fresh and lively colour and not in the least bit cloying. I like to contrast a paler but rich pink such as this with cooler blue-green detail. This shade will also look great with shots of well-judged mustard, brown and white.
- 4 A striking pink cotton velvet introduces welcome warmth and colour to a room, while adding freshness to this country garden floral Bowood wallpaper by Colefax and Fowler.

1 For stockists, see *Where to Buy*

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1



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RAW passion

Will and Caroline Atkinson both left busy jobs in the capital and re-trained as farmers in order to produce their own flavoursome goat's cheese in rural Somerset

WORDS BY ALEX REECE ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENT DARBY

EARLY SPRING

is a special time of year at Hill Farm Dairy – a 16th-century farmstead in the village of Stawley, south-west Somerset, with far-reaching views towards Exmoor and the Wellington Monument across the hills of the Tone Valley. Not only has there been the excitement of the newborn kids arriving in the barn – home to a 100-strong herd of British-breed goats – which farmers Will and Caroline Atkinson often find huddled up, top to tail with their mothers, from February onwards, but now is also the peak yield time for the milk, especially rich in butterfat and protein a month or so after kidding, and the main ingredient for the raw goat's cheese the couple have been making at this idyllic spot since 2009.

Neither Will nor Caroline has a farming background – Will was a lawyer and Caroline was working for Neal's Yard Dairy when they decided to quit London and move to the West Country for a more rural lifestyle in 2006. They settled first in Bath, and, while Will continued his career in law, Caroline pursued her passion for cheese, spending a couple of days a week working alongside Mary Holbrook, who has been making goat's cheese since the 1970s. "I absolutely loved the process," says Caroline, who was considering either running a cheese shop or her own dairy at the time. "I also liked having something ☺"



"The Anglo-Nubian goats are the drama queens of the barn and so much fun"

to show for your work at the end of the day." Over time, Caroline decided that she wanted to make her own raw-milk cheese (the unpasteurised aspect being a 'no brainer', she says, owing to the end product's greater depth of flavour). However, the more she and Will learned about cheesemaking, the more they wanted to keep their own animals, in order to have greater control over milk quality and flavour. Meanwhile, Caroline had developed a fondness for all things caprine while working at Mary Holbrook's. "Goats are such engaging animals: intelligent, full of character and very clean," she says. Will – who was to take on the role of farmer in their new enterprise – also liked the idea of entering a market that was, by comparison, less established. "There are 1.84 million dairy cows in the UK and 88,000 goats," he says. "For me, it was less daunting."

After first looking for a small farm around Bath, the couple broadened their search area to between Tiverton and Taunton and hit upon Hill Farm – a Grade II*-listed farmhouse dating back to the 1580s, with 30 acres and a stable block. The former fruit farm met all of their criteria – including their wish for a river running through their land; the Tone attracts kingfishers and otters to this part of Somerset. While still in Bath, they drew up plans for a new barn and dairy at the farmstead – commissioning the city's Designscape Architects to create the buildings for them. Also, just before moving in, they set about buying their goats

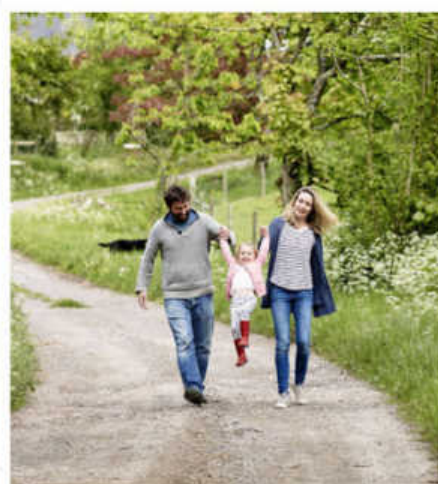
– 21 at first – from a farm in Cambridgeshire (which also provided them with a week's residential training). Of the three British breeds Caroline and Will keep at Hill Farm, two are of Swiss origin: the white, *Heidi*-esque Saanens produce a lot of milk, while the tan-coloured Toggenburgs' output is higher in fat and protein. The floppy-eared Anglo-Nubians, which are of Arab descent, make the least milk but also the richest. "They're the drama queens of the barn," Caroline says, "and so much fun."

The farm itself is traditionally managed, says Will, and the pair do not spray their fields, which they plant with broad-leaf grasses, plantains, chicory, peas and clover to suit the goats' dietary predilections. The fragrant, species-rich hay they feed them is procured from RSPB reserves on Sedgemoor on the Somerset Levels. Always keen to promote their animals' welfare, Will came up with an 'OAG' scheme, so that retired goats are adopted by locals wanting a pet that can also keep the weeds down. Now their herd is at full capacity, the female kids are sold on to other dairies, and the boys (which would, historically, have been euthanised

THIS PAGE At Hill Farm Dairy, the family keep three British breeds, including Toggenburgs, which produce morning and evening milk,

to make the soft Stawley cheese and fresh goat curd **OPPOSITE** Will with the Anglo-Nubians – they have grown the herd using their own kids





THIS PAGE Wellesley, their hard cheese, is left to mature for up to six months, and, during this period, is turned regularly and tasted to monitor

its development; the new barn and dairy provide the perfect environment for the goats, as well as giving the Atkinsons an idyllic country lifestyle

at birth) are bought by West Country farms that rear animals for Cabrito – the award-winning goat-meat business, founded by former River Cottage chef James Whetlor.

The new-build dairy – clad in Douglas fir, with picture windows overlooking wild-flower meadows and fields – makes for a pristine yet inspiring space in which to create their cheese. Stawley, a soft goat's cheese devised by Caroline and named after the village in which they live, was stocked by Neal's Yard Dairy from their very first season. It is made with a mix of evening and morning milk (the starter culture added to the evening milk helps to create its textural surface rind) and traditional animal rennet. Once the curd has been ladled into moulds, the cheeses are turned, salted and moved between the drying and ripening rooms – which vary in temperature and humidity – over two to three weeks to create the finished product, which is crumbly and creamy with fresh, citrus notes.

During peak times, the Atkinsons will make up to 1,000 Stawley cheeses a week – which will be dispatched in vans to Neal's Yard Dairy, and also sold to regional cheese shops, hotels and restaurants. In addition, they make goat curd and a hard cheese called Wellesley (the surname of the duke who took his title from their local town of Wellington). The latter has a denser,

nuttier flavour and is matured in the dairy for up to six months. Typically, milk production begins to slow down in autumn before the goats – and the farmers – have a rest from milking from December to early February. A significant change to the family's working patterns came in the form of daughter Kitty, now four. To prepare for her arrival, Caroline trained Will in cheesemaking so that he could move across to the dairy, while they employed farm manager Adam Lockyear to oversee the barn. (The Atkinsons have part-time help with the milking and in the dairy, too.) Throughout this time, Caroline has remained involved with the business from home, and hopes to be more hands-on again once Kitty goes to school: "Will never thought he'd be a cheesemaker, but he's brilliant at it," she enthuses. "He's applied his lawyer's brain, which is very detail-orientated, and has made so many great improvements.

"For us, the focus now is making the cheese better and better," she continues – and this is the creative challenge they both enjoy, as no two days in the dairy are ever the same. Certainly, the couple have no regrets about basing their lives here – where they can walk their two black Labradors, Molly and Twiggy, from the front door and indulge in stargazing at night. "It's a great place for Kitty to grow up," Caroline says. "And we are very lucky in that we live in an amazing community – it is definitely our forever home."

i For more information on Hill Farm Dairy's cheese and where to buy them, visit hillfarmdairy.co.uk and nealsyarddairy.co.uk.



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OTHER INNOVATIVE CHEESEMAKERS

Caroline and Will are not the only British artisans trying something a little different with raw ingredients



Mike's Fancy Cheese, County Down

While working in Belfast's Arcadia Deli, Michael Thomson noticed there was a lack of top-quality Northern Irish cheese. This accidental market research led him to train for a year at The School of Artisan Food in Nottinghamshire, where he gained a diploma in dairying, going on to become head cheesemaker for Sparkenhoe Farm in Nuneaton. On his return home at 27, he succeeded in crowdfunding his £80,000 set-up costs to produce Northern Ireland's only raw-milk cheese, Young Buck. Made by hand in Newtownards, County Down, and matured for four months, Young Buck – which has a long-lasting flavour, combining spiciness with a white-chocolatey sweetness – won best blue at the Irish Cheese Awards in October 2015 (mfcheese.com; thecourtyarddairy.co.uk).



Nettlebed Creamery, Oxfordshire

Rose Grimond, formerly of Orcadian producers' collective Orkney Rose, re-located to her mother's organic dairy farm in Oxfordshire after starting a family. She chose to make cheese in order to protect the longevity of the farm, launching St Bartholomew in January 2015. Rose describes the organic semi-hard, natural-rind, unpasteurised cow's milk cheese as a British Saint-Nectaire, with a savoury, nutty yet creamy flavour. The Creamery has numerous eco-credentials: it is heated by a woodchip boiler and Rose hopes soon to have a wetland system filtering their waste water. "We try to have a manufacturing process that is as green as possible, while creating something commercially successful that provides employment in the countryside," she says (nettlebedcreamery.com).



Fen Farm Dairy, Suffolk

Jonny Crickmore, along with wife Dulcie, is the third generation to run Fen Farm Dairy in Bungay, Suffolk. In May 2013, they diversified into cheesemaking, producing the award-winning Baron Bigod – the only traditional Brie-de-Meaux-style cheese made in the UK. For this, and their raw milk and butter, they rely on their herd of Montbeliarde cows – an ancient breed sourced by Jonny from the Alpine region of France, whose milk is particularly rich in protein. Further innovations include solar panels ("We milk our cows for free in the summer," Jonny says) and a heat-exchange system, by which the natural warmth of the cow's milk helps to heat the water used for washing down the milking parlour (fenfarmdairy.co.uk).



Holden Farm Dairy, Ceredigion

Hafod Welsh Organic Cheddar is made on Wales's longest certified organic farm – Bwlchwernen Fawr – by Patrick Holden (former director of the Soil Association and founder of the Sustainable Food Trust), his wife Becky and their team. The cheese was first developed in 2005 by Patrick's son Sam and his wife Rachel (who are now working on their next exciting cheese project), according to a recipe from the late Dougal Campbell, a local cheesemaker who learned his craft in Switzerland. Patrick describes Hafod – made using raw milk from their herd of Ayrshire cows – "as Cheddary yet complex", and evocative of the hillside on which they live, where no artificial fertilisers or pesticides have been used for 40 years (hafodcheese.co.uk).

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BRIGHT *and* BEAUTIFUL

Fields of golden daffodils herald the coming of spring on
a Cornish farm, where four generations of one family
have worked the land

WORDS BY KITTY CORRIGAN ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM SHAW





Will Hosking is perfecting the daffodil display in the parish church of St Michael Penkivel near Truro. She is a regular on the rota, but this Eastertide she takes particular pleasure in her task because the flowers have been grown and donated by her son James, who runs the family farm with his younger brother, Jeremy.

Since 1889, four generations of Hoskings have worked the land as tenant farmers at Pentongollan on the Tregothnan Estate. Today they grow more than 400 varieties of daffodils and narcissi, ranging in colour from the purest white to rich egg yolk yellow. Springtime visitors to the farm, which lies in the fertile valley of the River Fal, are greeted by the sight of fields stretching to the horizon filled with row upon row of blooms, standing in serried ranks like soldiers on parade. From a distance it can look as though the space between the budding trees and watery April sky is filled with gold.

The Cornish climate favours these plants, which flower in time for Christmas and continue vigorously until mid-April. Even in May, a final flourish of the appropriately named 'After All' can be seen, lone sentinels in a bare field. "As a nation we love daffodils, the harbingers of spring," says James, who lives on the estate with his wife Justine and youngest child, ☺



JAMES'S FAVOURITE DAFFODILS

- **'Rijnveld's Early Sensation'** This blooms early, sometimes around Christmas, and is good for the soul
- **'Cornish Chuckles'** A new and versatile variety
- **'Trelawney Gold'** Beautifully coloured, deep-yellow trumpet-type daffodil
- **'Golden Dawn'** A stunningly colourful narcissus
- **'Early Bride'** A gorgeous colour combination of white petals and tangerine trumpet



Frances, 17. "They are also the most economical vase of flowers you could have in your house." Passionate about the blooms, which are both his heritage and his livelihood, he likes to tempt customers away from the ubiquitous yellow trumpets: "When we send out Flowers by Post, we include up to six different kinds to complement each other."

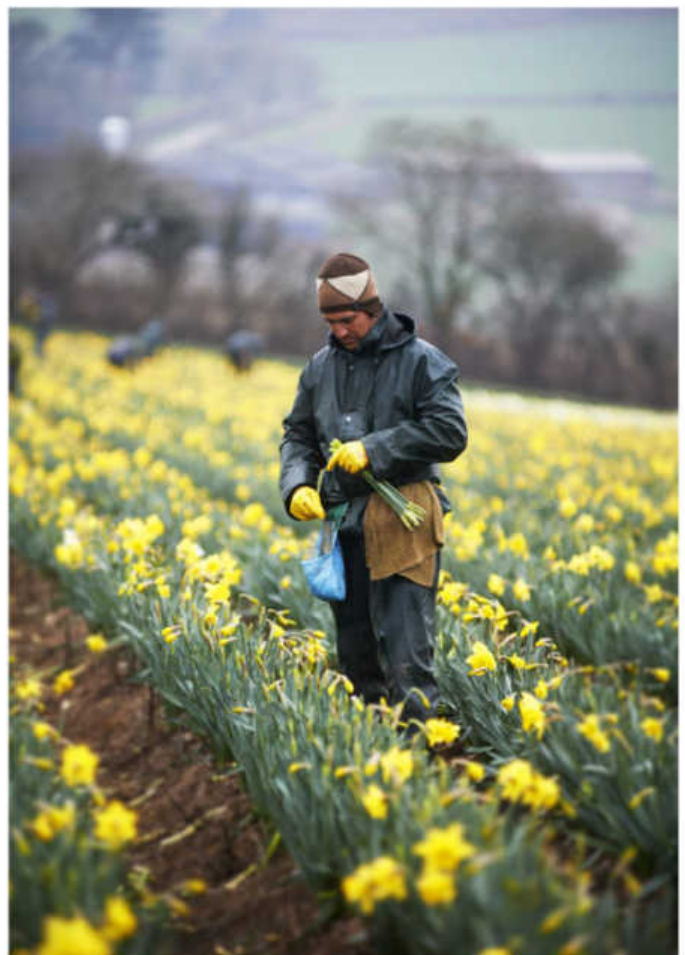
It's no surprise that the flowers, which bring long-awaited colour to dark and bleak winter landscapes, are national favourites. Their names alone raise a smile on a gloomy day: 'Cheerfulness', 'Magnificence', 'Early Flame', 'Sunny Girlfriend' and 'Cornish Chuckles' are just a handful of those on offer at Fentongollan. The family is constantly experimenting with new varieties, some of which are suggested by amateur gardeners, others sourced from a breeding programme that was initiated 20 years ago in Camborne, west Cornwall.

Half a century ago, the first daffodils were planted by James's pioneering father Jim, who decided to diversify from sheep, cattle and crops in order to secure a future for his children. James and Jeremy then took up the reins as tenant farmers in the mid-1980s, since when their acreage has expanded from 350 to 2,400.

James is in charge of flowers and arable (wheat, oats, barley, oilseed rape and spring beans), while Jeremy, who also lives on the estate with his wife and children, oversees the vegetables (if you have bought an English-grown cauliflower from a supermarket in the winter months, it probably started life as a seedling at Fentongollan) and the sheep. He looks after

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT The farm
grows more than 400 varieties
of daffodil – from early in the

year, a team of 40 people walk
carefully between the neat
rows, selecting the best blooms
for the cut-flower service





'Pull, don't pick' is the motto at Fentongollan

1,000 breeding ewes and their lambs, which are born just as the daffodil season reaches its peak in February, making for a busy time of year on the farm.

From their late father's inspired idea in 1963, the farm now derives 25 per cent of its income from 175 acres of flowers, with a typical nine-acre field containing 50 varieties. They pick 15 million stems and market 500 tonnes of bulbs every year.

The main picking season starts in January when an enlisted team of 40 methodically walk up and down each row, quickly but carefully choosing blooms to be sent out the following day. "Pull, don't pick" is the motto, with just enough pressure to leave the stem intact, and the bulb in the ground. They are laid on the dark soil in colourful bundles of ten, tied with an elastic band, to be gathered up on the way back down the row and then transferred to trays.

Daffodils cleverly self-seal so they don't dry out, but they must be chilled overnight in a large fridge to halt their growth. In the morning the first boxes are packed and sent off to wholesale markets in London, Gateshead, Sheffield and Birmingham; next in line are the supplies to supermarkets, garden centres, hotels and florists; then the export orders (mainly to Holland) and finally, the individually selected Flowers By Post, popular for birthdays, anniversaries and thank-you gifts, which leave the farm at 4.15pm to catch the train from Truro, six miles away.

"The most stressful time is preparing orders for Christmas," James says, walking carefully between the swaying rows. "Although there are flowers ready from November, we are weather dependent here and can't always guarantee we will have enough, so we buy in extra from the Scilly Isles, where the climate and growing conditions are similar."

After Easter, when customers switch from buying daffodils to tulips, James gets busy planning new varieties, at the same time overseeing the crops and preparing for the bulb harvest. During ➔



THIS PAGE James's family has been farming on the Fal Estuary since 1883



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"Daffodil bulbs can last up to 50 years"



THIS PAGE, FROM TOP When picked, the flowers are tied in bunches, ready for delivery

May and June, the bulbs lie in the ground so that the nutrients from the foliage can be absorbed to create a healthy flower next year. Since one row looks much like the next, white stakes are used to separate the different kinds before they are lifted with a machine similar to a potato picker, loaded into trailers, cleaned and graded according to size. One bulb doubles in two years, so generally one is sold and one re-planted. "Daffodil bulbs can last up to 50 years," James explains, "whereas a tulip bulb will have a great first year and then deteriorate."

Bulbs are sent out from September to November, while planting begins again on the farm. "After so many years you would think we would be prepared for everything," James says, "but recent wet winters have disrupted supply. It has been a struggle both to plant them and to lift them."

Undeterred by seasonal challenges, James and Jeremy are as forward-thinking as their father, and are trialling other flowers to fill in the gaps in the daffodil season: freesias, Cornish pinks and alstroemeria are on the agenda, too. They have also started marketing artisan foods by local producers, so that along with blooms for all seasons you can order wild garlic Cornish Yarg and other cheeses, oak-smoked charcuterie and fish, Cornish sea salt and saffron cake in a tin.

The future is certainly bright for Fentongollan. With an ever-increasing demand, and the fifth generation of the Hoskings showing every sign of carrying on the family tradition, it seems reassuringly likely that these Cornish fields will be lit with gold for many years to come. 

Fentongollan Farm, St Michael Penkivel, Truro, Cornwall (01872 520209; flowerfarm.co.uk). James and Jeremy are offering CL readers a 15 per cent discount on all orders, by phone or online, until 30 April 2016. Quote *Country Living* when ordering.



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SCENTS OF SPRING

The *Erysimum* is the short-lived perennial form of the biennial wallflower. *Erysimum* 'Winter Orchid' is a new and exceedingly lovely variety from Sarah Raven that has the fragrance of the biennial forms. Readers can receive a 20 per cent discount when they buy five plug plants for £9.20 (usually £11.50) or ten for £15.16 (usually £18.95), plus p&p from sarahraven.com, quoting the code CLERY5. Offer ends 30 April 2016.



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garden notes



Everything you need to know to get the most from your plot in April

WORDS BY STEPHANIE DONALDSON

taken a long hard look at the plants that I have overwintered and accepted that some are well past their prime. Where possible, I've taken cuttings, but I can't tell you what a relief it is to say goodbye finally to some of the sadder specimens that have lingered far too long. If I haven't managed to resurrect them from their slow decline in the past year or two, there is no reason to believe that this year will be any different. Besides which, this means that there's space and newly empty pots available for something far more interesting. Of course, there is still room for sentiment and the most precious plants aren't necessarily the rarest. They are the ones with memories attached – of a friend, a place or event – I will always find room for them. Find out what I'm growing at theenduringgardener.com.

THIS MONTH...

I don't think I am alone in finding it difficult to ditch surplus seedlings or consign struggling specimens to the compost heap. As gardeners, we nurture plants and throwing them away goes against the grain, but there comes a time when common sense must prevail – and this is better done earlier than later in the growing season. So this year I've resisted the temptations of seed catalogues and sown fewer varieties in smaller numbers, which means I'm not pricking out as many seedlings, saving on both compost and space at a time of year when the greenhouse and coldframe are full to bursting. I've also

WHAT TO DO

In the greenhouse

Take cuttings from half-hardy plants.

Sow tender crops in a heated propagator.

Pot on outdoor tomatoes.

Sow tender annual climbers.

In the garden

Hard-prune cotinus and sambucus to encourage fresh, colourful foliage.

Cut back old growth from penstemons and verbenas.

Lightly trim lavender and other silver-leaved plants into neat mounds.

On the allotment

Use a spade to cut sideshoots from globe artichokes and pot them up or plant out in well-cultivated ground.

Prune stone fruit once the leaves have emerged.

Prepare a runner bean trench. ➔





OUT & ABOUT

If you are looking for plants that do well in a northern climate, a visit to Summerdale Nursery and its adjoining garden just outside Lupton in Cumbria is recommended. Everything it sells has been grown on site and the majority propagated from seed, division or cuttings. The plant range is diverse and eclectic, specialising in shade-loving perennials, auriculas and primulas, with a small selection of interesting shrubs (summerdalegardenplants.co.uk).



Water, water anywhere

Most gardeners could do with some extra taps in the garden, but make do with dragging a hose around to avoid the expense and disruption involved in installation. Now Darlac has come up with an ingenious solution with its Take Anywhere Tap. As the name suggests, it can be set up in a garden or on an allotment, where it can be screwed to a wall, shed or fence post. The tap is fed by a length of hose that is brought from a fixed water source and clipped onto it using the quick connector attachment. And at £9.99, it is inexpensive enough to have one wherever it would be useful (darlac.com).

Tip: use canes laid flat on the ground to mark out areas where you've sown drifts of seeds until they emerge

STYLISH PLANTING



The Saxonian planting bucket is a traditional German design by Manufactum. Made of oak staves that are pegged, glued to be watertight and held together by hoops of zinc-coated steel, it is fire-treated on the inside, which gives it great longevity. From £177, sizes range from 40cm x 40cm to 60cm x 50cm (manufactum.com).

EVENT

The Harrogate Spring Flower Show will be taking place on 21-24 April (flowershow.org.uk)



PICK OF THE SHRUBS

Ribes sanguineum
'Pulborough Scarlet'

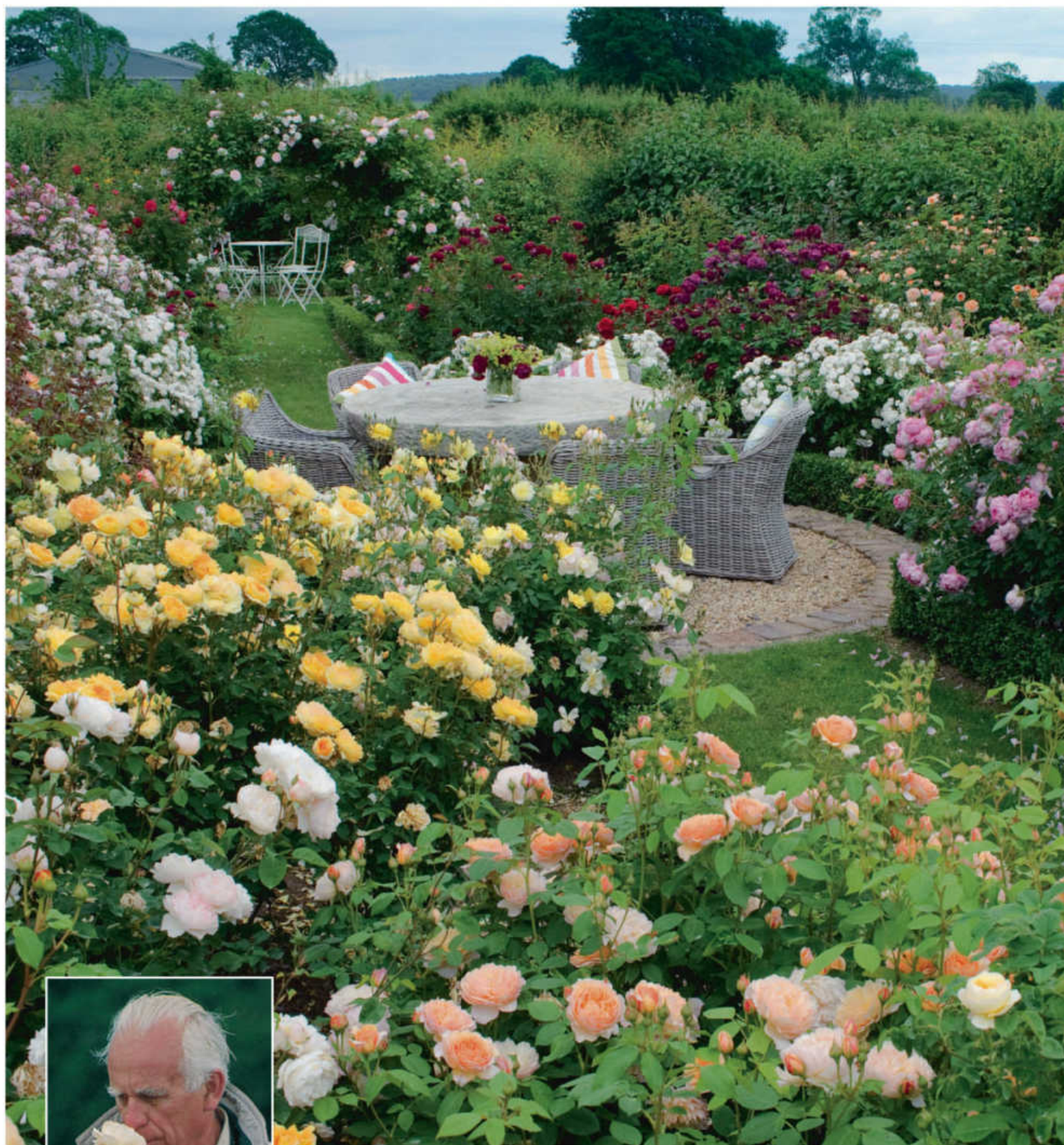
WHY? This flowering currant bears a profusion of dangling clusters of dark-red flowers, gradually joined by the newly emerging leaves. Undemanding and very easy to grow, it provides a brilliant splash of bright colour in the spring garden.

WHERE? It will flower most prolifically in a sunny position in moderately fertile, well-drained soil. Its compact, upright habit makes it a good choice for a small border and it can also be used as an informal hedging plant.

BEWARE The smell of the leaves doesn't appeal to everyone, so sniff before you buy! Aphids can be a problem in the summer months and will cause the leaves to curl and distort if not dealt with sufficiently promptly.



Ribes sanguineum
'Pulborough Scarlet'



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NATURE NOTES FROM *a small island*

Patrick Barkham has a passion for islands. In this series, he travels to four around the British coast to explore their unique landscape and way of life

This month: RATHLIN, THE SEAFARING ISLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANGELA HARDING

There is something odd about the sturdy white lighthouse on the western tip of Rathlin. I step through the door to find a series of small rooms, once home to the keepers, and take the stairs towards its light. These lead down, not up. At the bottom of the tower shines a red beacon, looking as though it has fallen from the towering basalt cliffs.

The upside-down lighthouse suits Rathlin, for it is an upside-down sort of place. The island's beaches are white but the cliffs are black. There are more birds than people. And there are more stories than birds, a rich accumulation of folklore, fact and funny tales. The most famous story suggests that Northern Ireland's only inhabited island was a crucible of Scottish nationalism, a sanctuary for Robert the Bruce, who was inspired in his struggle for independence by the perseverance of a spider spinning its web in one of Rathlin's sea caves.

Barely three miles from the mighty North Antrim coast, Rathlin's residents have long cherished their uniqueness. "The greatest punishment that can be inflicted on them is banishment from their island, which they love exceedingly, regarding Ireland as an altogether foreign country," noted the German travel writer Johann Georg Kohl in 1844.

In those days, Rathlin was a thriving community of 1,300 people. The seabirds saved them from the potato famine – islanders clambered the cliffs and added auks and their eggs to their diet – and today, perhaps, the seabirds have saved them again. A decade ago, like many remote islands, its population was dwindling. Ten years on, it's nearly doubled to 130, a boom

related, in part, to its avian residents. The passenger ferry for Rathlin leaves from the small port of Ballycastle. The island is surrounded by ocean trenches that exacerbate turbulent tidal races. One of these, Sloc na Mara, 'the gulp of the sea', still renders Rathlin inaccessible in rough weather and gives the boat a casual buffeting when I cross.

Springtime westerlies dispatch squalls and sunshine, which illuminates the cottages of Church Bay, the island's main settlement and harbour. Its cheerful white beaches are the legacy of limestone strata below the dark basalt, which forms the spectacular columns of the Giant's Causeway across the water.

The ferry unloads bananas and bacon for the shop as I'm greeted by Liam McFaul, a bearded islander who drives a battered Land Rover, its bumper tied on with string. Rathlin is known for its decrepit cars. Islanders don't require MOTs and occasionally an eight-year-old may be spotted at the wheel. The island is beautiful but it is a working community, not a folk museum; husks of cars lurk behind stone walls, relieved of the spare parts that residents can't just pop to the shop to buy.

Liam is the RSPB's warden but, like most islanders, has a dozen jobs: organic farmer, fisherman, firefighter and member of the coastguard rescue. He's also a natural storyteller. Rathlin's history is spoken and passed through the generations. As a result, the past is unusually present on the island: "It's very close – you can touch it," says Benji McFaul, Liam's nephew and the island's only full-time fisherman. I spend evenings listening to Liam and Benji's stories of long-dead islanders who are as vivid as if they



There are more
stories than birds, a
rich accumulation of
folklore, fact and
funny tales

knew them personally – Paddy the Climber, who defied death to collect cliff-edge seabird eggs for wealthy ornithologists; an old man who took a nap on a boat and had his long beard tarred to the vessel by young jokers; an elderly resident who believed that the people on one of Rathlin's first TVs lived inside the box. My favourite? The islander who was so seasick on a crossing, he vomited his false teeth over the side. A few days later, a fisherman caught a monster cod and found it wearing the teeth.

Before I climb an iron gate to explore the vertiginous northern cliffs, Liam points out that it's actually a railing from the deck of *The Hind*, one of hundreds of ships wrecked on the rocks below. During the First World War, German U-boats lurked in the trenches close to the island, sinking *HMS Drake*. An event that marked an ironic twist of fate since its namesake (Sir Francis Drake) was the architect of a notorious 16th-century massacre on Rathlin, when hundreds of islanders were killed.

Today, it is a place of peace and, after walking through heather-clad uplands, past trees furry with peppermint-coloured lichen, the secret of its modern-day success is revealed at the West Light. The lighthouse beacon was built at the bottom because a light at the top would be too high to guide mariners. Its terrace provides an awesome seabird experience. There's a big reveal when you

descend the steps: a tumult of screaming and an acrid smell from thousands of nesting birds crammed onto rocky stacks and ledges. Rathlin's residents include 135,000 guillemots and the biggest colony of razorbills in Europe; there are puffins, kittiwakes, fulmars and great skuas. The island is also home to Northern Ireland's only breeding pair of choughs.

This spectacle attracts many admirers and the burgeoning tourist trade is vital. Each year, the RSPB brings volunteers to do conservation work. Others travel from all over Europe to help on Liam's farm or in Rathlin's one hostel. Many fall in love with the island; a few fall in love with islanders. Volunteers and visitors settling on the island has helped it grow again. I chat to Patsy as she sits in the island café with her two-year-old son Rowan. She grew up in Belfast, studied ecology and then volunteered for the RSPB in 2006. "It was a heatwave, a gorgeous summer, so I saw Rathlin at its best," she says. She also met Sean McFaul, Liam's nephew and an assistant warden, and eventually moved to Rathlin to be with him. "People from Belfast always say to me, 'Are you not lonely on that island?'" she says. "In Belfast, I lived in the same house for 20 years but I only knew my neighbours. Over here, everyone knows everyone, you go to every event that's organised and so there's a very strong community." Last year, there was a



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baby boom, and five were born on the island. Locals are delighted that their primary school has expanded from three to nine. "There aren't many longstanding residents left, but new blood brings new ideas and a new lifeline to the island," says Rowan's great-grandmother, Peggy McFaul. Peggy, 84, doesn't call herself an islander: she moved here when she was 14.

I come away invigorated by Atlantic winds and inspired by the stories. One folk tale tells of an enchanting isle, a mysterious green island, which rises out of the sea between Rathlin and the mainland every seven years. It doesn't matter that none of us can ever reach this chimera: Rathlin is the real thing.

1 Patrick Barkham is the author of *The Butterfly Isles*, *Badgerlands and Coastlines*. His next book, *Islander*, will be available in 2017; all published by Granta.



TRAVEL FACTS

Out-of-season Rathlin is atmospheric but most visitors arrive between May and July, when thousands of screaming seabirds nest on the cliffs. Rathlin Island's passenger ferry provides a 25-minute crossing (weather permitting) from the pretty port of Ballycastle in Co Antrim. Bert and Francis's 'puffin' buses take you up the tiny lanes to the RSPB's Rathlin West Light Seabird Centre. The organisation has also opened clifftop walking trails in the north and south of the island (see rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/seenature/reserves/guide/r/rathlin). The spectacular lighthouse is open to the public for the first time this year as part of the Great Lighthouses of Ireland trail (greatlighthouses.com/lighthouses/rathlin-west-light). Rathlin has a good shop, a lovely café and fine views from the unmissable pub, McCuaig's Bar. Visit the Rathlin Community website, rathlincommunity.org, for times of sailings and news of the refurbished Manor House, offering additional accommodation and due to open this summer. Other options are Sean McFaul's modern hostel (rathlinhostel.com, from £18 per person per night) or volunteer for the RSPB and get to stay in Liam and Alison McFaul's lovely Kinramer Cottage (kinramercottage.com, from £20 per room per night; sleeps ten; pets welcome).





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in the Festival Theatre, while *The One Show*'s Christine Walkden will offer advice and planting tips in the Get Going Get Growing arena. CBeebies star Ben Faulks as Mr Bloom hopes to inspire a new generation, and Mark Diacono and Valentine Warner will host the Kitchen Garden Hub at the heart of the Food & Drink Pavilion. Also, don't forget to visit the *Country Living* Pavilion, where you will find a range of exhibitors showcasing the best in British arts and crafts.



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From the makers of



A flying success



Britain's youngest professional falconer loves to share his passion for the magnificent birds of prey he trains and displays

WORDS BY JULIE RICHARDS-WILLIAMS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MONTGOMERY

With the arrival of April, a magical transformation is taking place in Penllyn Forest, the dense green spruce woods covering the lower slopes of the mountains above the historic Welsh town of Bala.

Spring is in the air and the forest is coming alive once more. Slowly the morning mist fades away, revealing the beauty of the woodland, which echoes with the calls of wild birds and hums with insects. Never happier than when he is close to nature, Peter Wright, 17, is on his way to a secret location nearby where he trains his magnificent birds of prey. With a maturity beyond his years, he set up his own falconry business, Wrightway Raptors, three years ago, and now combines studying for his A-levels with flying and demonstrating his birds at events around the country.

Following Peter from tree to tree is a handsome male Harris hawk. This is Storm, his first and favourite aerial predator. A juvenile when Peter bought him five years ago, he has developed into a handsome, social bird, with strikingly patterned dark brown and chestnut plumage, white-tipped tail and long, powerful talons that are ideal for seizing prey. Suddenly a twig snaps and Storm is off, soaring noiselessly upwards. Despite being captive-bred, the bird's hunting instincts are strong and he loves pursuing the small quarry the forest provides.

As Peter strides along the secluded track, he enters a sunlit glade, raises his left arm – gloved to protect it from Storm's talons – and stands waiting. Moments later, the hawk appears, moving through the air with broad outstretched wings. With unerring accuracy, Storm flies towards the young man and, deliberately clipping Peter's ear with a wingtip – a playful gesture of affection he has used since he was a juvenile – the bird alights on his forearm.

Peter's interest in birds of prey began when he first held a hawk at a medieval show at Bodelwyddan Castle and was immediately captivated by its beauty and power. "After that I wanted to get my own and start flying it," he says. Four years later, aged just 12,

with £300 saved in pocket money from helping his parents with their smallholding in the hills above Bala, he bought Storm. Despite his youth, Peter was determined to learn as much as possible about the species, and taught himself the necessary handling skills using books and the internet, as well as taking advice from other falconers. Birds of prey, he explains, are extremely intelligent and learn quickly. They are trained through trust, patience and their natural hunger, and will fly to the handler's gauntlet when a tempting morsel is held out (in Storm's case, a mix of dead chicks, rabbit and mice).

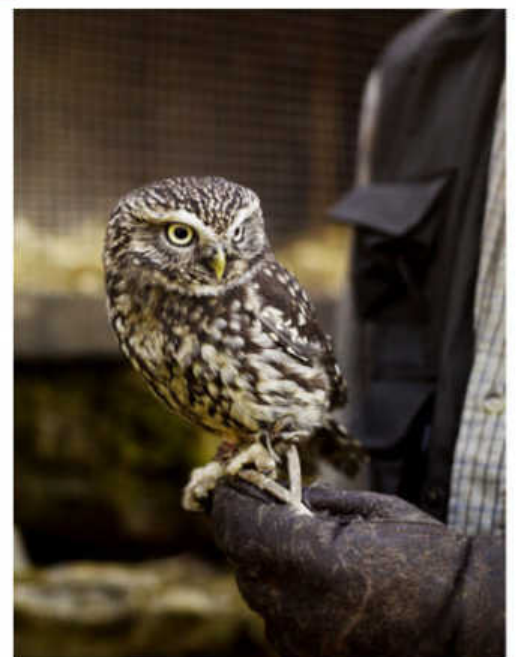
Described as the noblest of all field sports, falconry is the ancient art of hunting wild prey in its natural environment using a trained bird of prey. Once the preserve of the wealthy, interest in falconry is on the increase in Britain, with a new generation of enthusiasts, like Peter, who train birds to fly and raise awareness about them rather than hunt.

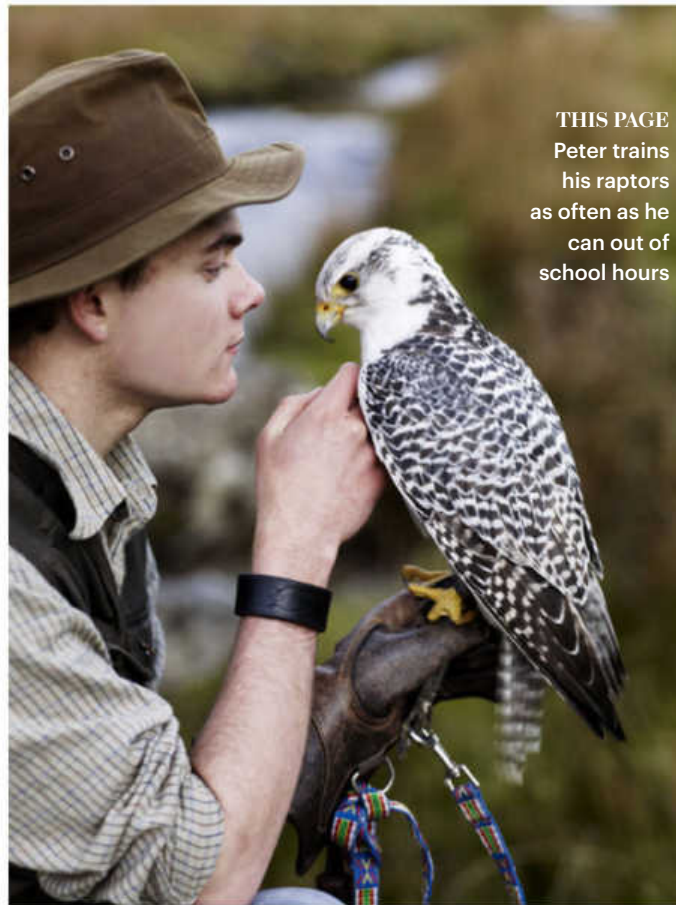
"Every bird has a different personality and can be bold, outgoing, aggressive or timid and shy, and even downright mischievous – so training needs a lot of understanding and is time consuming," explains Peter, whose highlight came when Storm finally flew without a creance, a long, thin line that stops the bird flying away during training. "Storm was the perfect first bird, as he was fairly easy to train and, importantly, willing to please."

Soon Peter acquired two more Harris hawks, Big Lady and Harry, and today his collection of falcons, hawks and owls has reached 18 – the latest being a European eagle owl called Spook. They all live in spacious aviaries near the house he shares with his parents Patrick and Lindsey and younger sister Megan.

"I grew up with all kinds of animals on the smallholding, so caring for the birds came naturally to me," says Peter, who juggles this with school. His day starts early in the morning, checking all the birds. "I can do this just by looking at their stance, as it's a good indication of how healthy they are. A poorly bird tends to have drooping wings, half-closed eyes and will be lacklustre," he explains. "Before school I train Storm, Big Lady and Harry in the woods and afterwards I fly as many as I can, concentrating on any new birds. Then it's cleaning and feeding time, and, finally, some may even join me for an hour or two of watching television"

THIS PAGE AND
OPPOSITE At his
home in Bala, Peter
now owns 18 birds
of prey, including
Storm (centre) – his
sister Megan is also
an enthusiast





THIS PAGE
Peter trains
his raptors
as often as he
can out of
school hours



in the house. It sounds funny but it's part of the 'manning' process, which gets a bird acclimatised to different sights and sounds."

As Peter and Storm's confidence grew, he started giving displays and demonstrations locally. Then, in October 2013, with the full support of his parents, he decided to turn his hobby into a business. A teacher at his school, Ysgoly Berwyn in Bala, told him about Llwyddo'n Lleol (Succeeding Locally), a government-backed scheme that aims to help youngsters in north Wales aged 11-19. Peter put together a presentation and business plan and was delighted to receive a grant for £1,000, which he used to buy the equipment he needed, including perches, travel boxes and a canopy to protect the birds when doing shows. His first clients were staff from retailer John Lewis on a corporate weekend: "I was nervous about teaching them to handle and fly birds, but it went well, which was a great confidence booster." Now, bookings are increasing, with people of all ages keen to experience falconry. "No two weeks are the same," he explains. "Work varies from individuals on a birthday treat to an audience of thousands at my largest venue so far, Nanteos Mansion, a stately home near Aberystwyth."

Peter also takes his birds into mainstream and special-needs schools, giving talks, displays and presentations. Now, with the arrival of spring, he will be guiding bird enthusiasts on hawk and owl walks in spectacular scenery in North Wales. "Most people are overawed by a close encounter with a raptor, although I find that children are braver than adults!" Peter says. This is certainly the case with his nine-year-old sister Megan, who is following in his footsteps and already the proud owner of two kestrels and a barn owl.

After leaving school, Peter hopes to make Wrightway Raptors his full-time job and has plans for its future: "I want to expand the educational side and increase visits to schools to give more children the opportunity to get up close to these amazing birds."

Wrightway Raptors, Llangower, Bala, Gwynedd (01678 504543; wrightwayraptors.wix.com/wrightway-raptors).

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ALL IN THE DETAIL



Botanical artist Lizzie Harper produces meticulously accurate watercolours of flora and fauna in her wonderful celebrations of nature's beauty

WORDS BY KITTY CORRIGAN ● ILLUSTRATIONS BY LIZZIE HARPER

AS SHE ADDS A FINAL FLOURISH to an illustration of one of her favourite spring flowers, Lizzie Harper confides, "Cowslip leaves are a nightmare. In order to make a leaf look real, you have to get the shadows right, and that depends on where the light falls. It can take five hours to reproduce one leaf. Thistles and primroses are very difficult, too, while watercress is easy because the leaves are so smooth."

With a degree in zoology and an HND in natural history illustration, Lizzie combines her passions for art and nature in producing anatomically precise watercolours for clients such as Natural England and Royal Mail. Her love of the natural world began in childhood when one of her favourite pastimes

was dismantling the compost heap in the garden with her father to discover the treasures within. Both he, a tutor, and her mother, an artist, encouraged her to commit her findings to paper. "Draw what you see" was her instruction, which is now Lizzie's own advice to aspiring artists.

Much of her research is done on long country walks from her home in Herefordshire, where she lives with her partner Andy and children Bill, nine, and Enid, six: "I know it drives the children mad when I suddenly exclaim, 'Stop! I've seen a wonderful butterwort!' I can tell you five locations where you will find meadowsweet, or wild garlic for making pesto. Sometimes I feel like a modern-day plant hunter."

"I HAVE HAD THE SAME PAINTBOX since I was 11. It contains 30 paints, which I top up with tubes. I use Dr Martin's watercolours and watercolour inks. The shade I've used here is called Opera Pink, which is shockingly bright, but for things like geraniums and rose petals it's vital. There are some natural colours that are a nightmare to re-create – primrose yellow, for example – year after year the primroses come out and I try to capture the exact hue but it's never quite right. Forget-me-not blue and the pale pink of a dog rose are also really difficult. In a way, I don't mind, though – these things are unique to nature and so I shouldn't be able to reproduce them too easily." 🌸



"WHEN BUTTERFLIES DIE, their wings look just as they did when they were alive, so I have time to get them exactly right, whereas within ten minutes of a dragonfly's death, the colour fades. I love to paint butterflies, though some moths, such as the burnet, are equally beautiful. When I paint ladybirds, I'll pop them in the freezer for a few minutes first – it doesn't hurt them, but slows them down a bit so I can encapsulate them before they run away. My freezer also contains a lot of roadkill. You're likely to find a robin or a bullfinch next to the fish fingers." 🐞



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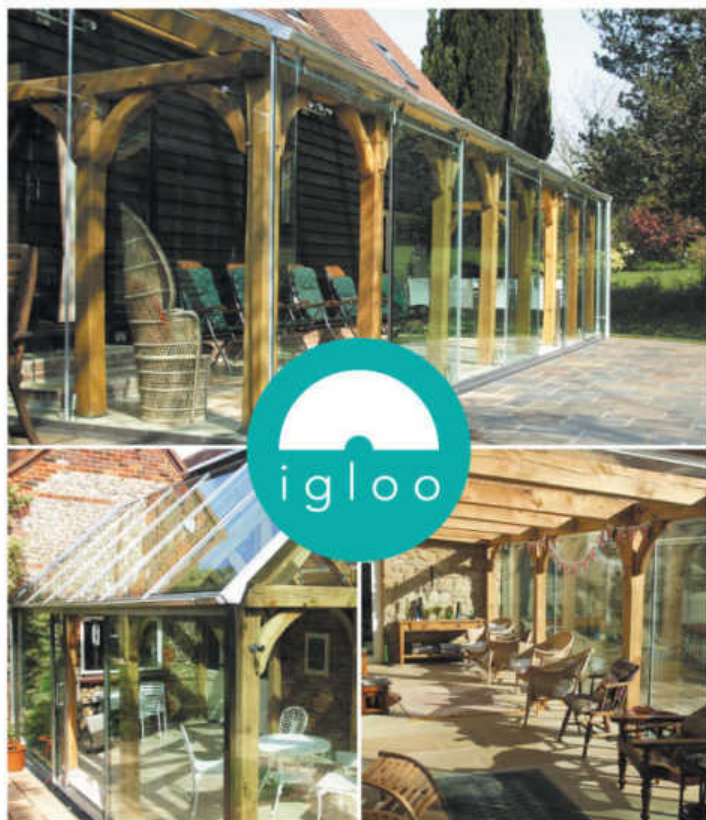
"PEOPLE TEND TO FOCUS on the flowers of a plant but often I find the detail on the leaves even more fascinating. When I'm asked to paint something, I'll always try to find a specimen but if it's out of season I'll use photographs or reference books. The best are from the 14th and 15th centuries – the images are always beautifully rendered and it's interesting to see how, despite time passing, the natural world looks just the same."

i To find out more about Lizzie and her work, visit lizzieharper.co.uk. Lizzie is offering Country Living readers the chance to buy a limited-edition print of one of the images* on the previous pages for £75. Email info@lizzieharper.co.uk for further information.



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INTERIORS

MID-CENTURY *mood*



Classic designs and quirky, colourful accessories bring distinctive character to an inspiring family home in Winchester

WORDS BY SUE GILKES • STYLING BY LAURA VINE • PHOTOGRAPHS BY CATHERINE GRATWICKE



FIVE YEARS AGO, when Victoria Suffield's husband Philippe suggested going to view what they had always referred to as "the spooky house" around the corner from their home in Winchester, she was understandably reluctant. Set back from the road, with a neglected air and wild, overgrown garden, it had little obvious appeal. Once persuaded to step inside, however, she was pleasantly surprised. "Even though it was falling down, I knew straightaway that we could make it into something special," she says.

Built as a family home in the 1930s, it had six bedrooms and, crucially, plenty of living space for the couple and their teenage children, Hal, Theo and Mercy – an important consideration, as the move was prompted by the fact they'd outgrown their previous property, a narrow Victorian terraced house a few hundred yards

away, where they had lived for the previous ten years. Keen to find something in the same neighbourhood, as it had a great community spirit and was just a ten-minute walk from Victoria's shop, The Hambledon, in the centre of town, the house fitted the bill perfectly.

It was her business that had brought the family to Winchester 15 years ago, from Dorset where she had been working with her mother Wendy at her popular lifestyle emporium, The Hambledon Gallery, in Blandford Forum. Over the years, Victoria had noticed a particular concentration of her mail-order customers around Winchester, so it seemed the natural place to set up an outpost.

Although the house required reroofing, rewiring and replumbing – "It took a year and we lived there while the work was done around us," Victoria recalls – they didn't feel the need to do



OPPOSITE A Cherner armchair and Gubi Semi pendant light create stylish focal points in the dining room **THIS PAGE** Vintage pressed-glass cakestands and moulds line the kitchen shelves



much structurally to the interior. The one exception was the orange Formica-clad kitchen, which was in serious need of an overhaul, so they enlisted the help of their friend David Rose, an expert in interior architecture and design, who had already masterminded the transformation of a beautiful old property in the historic heart of the city into their stylish shop. "He is brilliant with space," Victoria enthuses, "while being very respectful of the character of period buildings." So the wall between the tiny kitchen and scullery was taken down to create an open-plan kitchen/dining

THIS PAGE Fresh flowers and foliage pick up on the hues of a kilim and patchwork blanket, which provide comfortable touches that soften the bold lines of the artwork on the wall

OPPOSITE In the breakfast room, Caravaggio lampshades cast ambient pools of light onto the wooden schoolroom table, which is teamed with white Polo chairs by Robin Day

area that is now a sociable area for cooking and eating, with its focus a plain wooden schoolroom table, given to them by Victoria's father, and complemented by a set of classic white Robin Day chairs.

At one end of the room, a streamlined run of matt white Ikea cupboards, with a stainless-steel worksurface, are softened by the warm tones and rich patina of the parquet flooring. An appealing period feature, along with charming brick fireplaces and metal-framed Crittall windows, it had been laid in every room on the ground floor, except the scullery. When this was knocked through, the difference in flooring presented a bit of a dilemma but, amazingly, Victoria managed to track down an old pitch-pine version salvaged from a ballroom in Portsmouth that was a perfect match. "You can't even see the join!" she exclaims.

Handsome original floor-to-ceiling, part-glazed cupboards take up one wall of the breakfast room, providing a wonderful showcase as well as generous storage. They were painted grey by the



THIS PAGE Dark grey walls in the TV room/study create a calm, restful effect and provide the perfect foil for an Eames desk chair upholstered in rich red leather and a colourful Moroccan rag rug

OPPOSITE Victoria has a fondness for delicate lustreware, which is arranged alongside other vintage finds, paintings and dried flower heads to form a distinctive display



“I’m interested in individual pieces: I want the house to be about the objects in it”





“I am a firm believer in white paint and its ability to make everything look fine”

THIS PAGE, ABOVE LEFT This vintage advertising print adds a bright touch **ABOVE RIGHT** The en-suite bathroom off the master bedroom makes great

use of space under the eaves **OPPOSITE** A vintage quilt found on ebay complements a quirky array of works by artist friends and family members

couple, who have used variations on this shade, offset by white, throughout – the only exception being Mercy’s bedroom, which is a bold turquoise at her own request. “I am a firm believer in white paint and its ability to make everything look fine,” Victoria says. Certainly easier than deliberating over colour charts, this approach worked wonders in eliminating the vivid egg-yolk yellow in the kitchen and gloomy burgundy in the dining room, giving the house a coherent fresh, clean look – a blank canvas ready for decoration.

“I’m more interested in a few choice individual pieces than in colour – I want the house to be about the objects in it,” Victoria explains. “My style is fairly simple as I am a pretty ruthless curator and only display the things I really like.” The walls are host to an eye-catching array of artwork – gifts from artists, acquired during her time as an art dealer, are interspersed with quirky pieces by her creative family and friends, as well as her own work.

In a similar fashion, a confident and eclectic mix of furniture and accessories, including many classic mid-century designs, bring distinctive character, shape and texture to each room. Victoria is not an avid collector, preferring to “pick up items that

appeal on their own merits when I come across them rather than because they fit into a particular category or other”. Elegant antique lustreware cups and saucers and her grandmother’s pressed-glass cakestands have found a place alongside 1950s chairs by Eames and Cherner and bold contemporary Gubi and Caravaggio lights.

Many of these treasures were sourced on ebay, while others are prized finds from junk shops and car-boot sales. In the past, Victoria used to pick up pieces for the shop in the same way but, these days, is too busy running the Winchester shop and a new venture at Cowley Manor in Gloucestershire, so relies on dealers for the vintage stock she sells among a carefully edited collection of homeware, clothing and indulgent bath and beauty treats. Originally set up as a branch of her mother’s idiosyncratic Dorset store, after a year Victoria took it over independently, enabling her to develop her own individual aesthetic and tastes. Hardly surprising, then, that whenever searching for something special for her own home, she need look no further than The Hambledon, where she invariably finds exactly what she wants. 📍

📍 *The Hambledon, 10 The Square, Winchester, Hampshire (01962 890055; thehambledon.com), and at Cowley Manor, Cowley, Gloucestershire (01242 870509).*

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I'VE GOT RESERVATIONS
ABOUT
SO MANY THINGS
BUT
NOT ABOUT YOU



the passionate gardeners



Continuing our series profiling horticultural devotees whose gardens and lives are shaped by their love of one species of plants, we meet Robin and Annabel Graham from Drointon Nurseries in North Yorkshire, where they specialise in border auriculas

WORDS BY STEPHANIE DONALDSON ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD BLOOM

Primula auricula 'Bailey Boy'





SIX EASY-TO-GROW BORDER AURICULAS

'Eden Blue Star'

Dark blue-purple flowers with pale inner ring

'Eden Greenfinch'

Green-tinged tawny brown flowers

'Gwai Loh'

Strong grower with dark reddish-brown flowers

'Wycliffe Midnight'

Large wavy-edged purple flowers, fading gently to the outside of the petals

'Hazel'

Yellow with wavy-edged petals

'Bran'

Very dark velvety flower with yellow centre

"Shades vary from almost black to white and every tone in between"

Are you both enthusiastic gardeners?

Since we married 36 years ago [Robin says], Annabel has been the gardener wherever we have lived. Many winter evenings were spent drawing plans and researching plants. Until 2001, I worked elsewhere, so my efforts were confined to structural work, hedges and lawns.

When did you become interested in auriculas?

Annabel's mother grew them for pleasure and she passed on some spare plants to her, with the comment, "Just a hobby you might enjoy now the boys are away at school". Those original auriculas were grown in the shade at the side of the garage with minimal weather protection. It was not long before the first 6ft x 10ft polytunnel was 'needed'. The collection increased and, within a few years, a bigger tunnel was installed and surplus plants were being sold at plant fairs, from the garden gate and via mail order. The first catalogue was issued in 1999 and was printed to order at home.

How did you move on to owning a nursery?

Initially we expanded as a fill-in occupation when I was made redundant after 25 years in

industry. Many people would advise not to turn a hobby into a business, especially when it's run by a husband-and-wife team – it can lead to failure of both the business and the relationship. We seem to have flown in the face of 'good advice' so far! A lot of this is down to having distinct roles. The plants are Annabel's responsibility and I help out as time allows. My industry background brings business knowledge and experience to the nursery, but neither of us could run it without the other.

What is the difference between border auriculas and their rarefied relatives, the show auriculas?

Border auriculas used to be called garden auriculas or Dusty Millers and should always be hardy, floriferous and have a sweet scent. All other auriculas come into the category of ➡

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Annabel demonstrates how to propagate auriculas by division, in order

to create healthy new plants **OPPOSITE** A colourful mixed display of rows of border auriculas

OLD DREAM
BLUE

OLD GLOVE RED

OLD COTTAGE
BLUE

OLD Black Isle
by H.M.

OLD IRISH BLUE

OLD GOLD
DUSTY MILLER

OLD FASHIONED

LINTZ

CIROS





“The most appealing quality is their enormous variation”

‘florist’s flowers’ and meet certain specific written criteria, but there are no rules and restrictions with border auriculas. However, not everything sold as one behaves like one, so we always trial new cultivars outdoors to check their hardiness.

What are the characteristics of border auriculas that appeal to you?

The most appealing quality is their enormous variation. They range from large clumps bearing numerous flower spikes and full-petalled blooms that shout their joy at you to the smaller, shyer plants nearer the ground that require closer inspection to appreciate their full beauty. Colours vary from almost black to white and every tone and shade in between. Some carry heavy meal or farina (a white powder similar to fine flour on flowers, stems and leaves) while others show no trace of it. They are incredibly diverse.

What is the best way to grow border auriculas?

A good true border type thrives in a well-drained situation outside in a large container or a border. They can be grown successfully in a smaller 10cm pot but will never reach their full potential of a floriferous multi-flower-spiked clump.

What soil should they be grown in?

Auriculas hate a wet compost or soil, so good sharp drainage is vital. For pots we recommend a mix of equal parts of John Innes Compost No 2, multi-purpose compost, and perlite or grit for drainage. In open ground, or a large planter, dig in at least 30 per cent grit to improve the drainage. Heavy clay soils are best avoided – use a container instead.

What and how often do you feed them?

We don’t feed much – just a fully balanced liquid fertilizer at half strength every two to three weeks in spring, with a half-strength low-nitrogen liquid feed in autumn. For plants in the

open ground or large containers, we dig in some bone meal when we plant – they are not fed again.

Do they need regular dividing?

In the garden they’re happiest left to form a clump that will give multiple flower spikes and a more striking display. After two to three years, lift and divide them in early spring or autumn when they have become ‘leggy’ with a bare stem poking out of the soil. In pots, repot into fresh compost each year. Offsets can then be removed with some left on and the plant moved into a slightly larger pot.

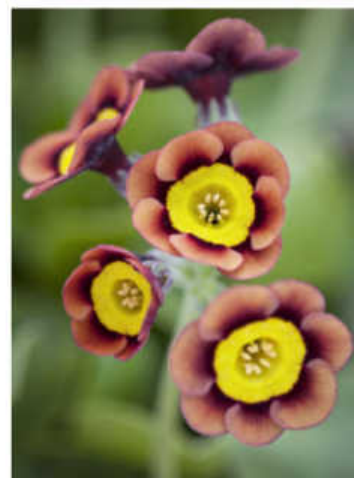
How should they be looked after once they have flowered?

The flower head should be nipped off, leaving the stem to dry out before being removed. Stand potted plants in a cool, shady place and keep just moist over summer. As plants go into a near-dormant state in hot weather, some lower leaves will die off and can be removed once brown and brittle. Position open-ground plants to have shade in summer and they can then be left alone.

Are there pest and disease problems?

The main pests are vine weevil and spider mite. Prevention is better than cure with vine weevil, so treat compost twice a year with a recommended insecticide or biological control. Spider mite can be a problem in hot weather if plants are under cover. Spray with a diluted mix of washing-up liquid, including the underside of the leaves. This does not kill eggs, so repeat treatments are necessary. Botrytis occurs mainly in early spring and late autumn on plants grown under cover. Good ventilation and the removal of dead leaves and flower stalks should control the problem. 🐛

📍 **Drointon Nurseries, Plaster Pitts, Ripon, North Yorkshire (01765 641849; auricula-plants.co.uk).**



OPPOSITE Robin and Annabel offer a wide range of plants for sale from their collection of more than 900 cultivars **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Varieties at Drointon Nurseries include ‘White Pyne’, ‘Chamois’, ‘Wycliffe Midnight’, ‘Bowen’s Blue’, ‘T A Hadfield’ and ‘Old Clove Red’



rustic RENOVATION

The simple but stylishly restored interior of a stone cottage in Oxfordshire provides the perfect backdrop for a covetable collection of antique French finds

WORDS AND STYLING BY ALI HEATH ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMMA LEWIS







In a rural Oxfordshire village close to the River Cherwell, this once-neglected Grade II-listed cottage, with views overlooking open countryside, has been sympathetically transformed into a tranquil haven by Gilli Hanna and her partner Graham Wilson. With its traditional thatched roof and thick stone walls, the compact but charming 18th-century property has an enchanting feel and is filled with a carefully curated mix of beautiful antiques.

"We were living in London and contemplating buying a narrowboat for weekend escapes," Gilli explains. "On a chance visit we happened to find a boat, complete with mooring, for sale on the Oxford Canal. We started to visit regularly and loved exploring the unspoilt valley, catching glimpses of kingfishers and other wildlife, and foraging for fresh ingredients to make nettle soup, elderberry cordial and sloe gin."

They came across the run-down wisteria-covered cottage on one of their walks. The interior was in a bad state of repair, but the couple, with their shared long-standing passion for architecture and restoration, knew that they could reinstate the integrity of the original one-bedroom dwelling. "For the first year, we

OPPOSITE The kitchen dresser, constructed by Graham from reclaimed wood, is the ideal showcase for many treasured finds, including a collection of pale jugs and large soupières

THIS PAGE, TOP A portrait from a French chateau creates a striking focal point in the elegant sitting room **RIGHT** Vintage pieces are displayed informally on every surface





Eye-catching still-life arrangements bring additional character to every room



stayed on the narrowboat at weekends and worked incredibly hard to bring life back into the old place," Gilli recalls.

Both ardent members of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the couple were determined to rehabilitate the cottage using traditional methods. Old damp-proof courses were removed and replaced with lime mortar, vinyl paint was stripped off and walls treated with limewash and distemper, beams were wirebrushed to create a brighter look, coloured wax was scraped off the quarry tiles and floorboards were revived with Gilli's homemade turpentine, lavender and grated beeswax polish.

The final change was to extend the house to create a larger downstairs bathroom and an upstairs study. "We bought a patch of land from our neighbours, which allowed us to double the size of our space," Gilli says. With the internal restoration complete, in 2006 she decided to set up her antiques business: "I turned 50 and had always wanted to own a van and go to France in search of antique treasures. Reaching this milestone and feeling settled in our home meant the time seemed right." Having spent years living abroad, many of them working in France, Gilli was already fluent in the language and knew the country well.

This change in lifestyle has strongly influenced the look of the cottage's interior, and her many vintage finds, carefully edited by form or function, are beautifully offset by a palette of calming whites and greys. The kitchen dresser, built by Graham using reclaimed wood, is filled with Gilli's much-prized collection of French *soupières*. "I love their shape, colour and patina. Chips and cracks don't worry me," she says. In the upstairs sitting room, a striking portrait of a French gentleman, found in a chateau





OPPOSITE, TOP Calming off-white walls in the attic bedroom are punctuated by old wooden beams and the warm tones of throws, rugs, vintage trunks and hampers

BELOW Antique urns create a striking display in the light-filled bathroom **THIS PAGE** An array of quirky antique finds encroach on Gilli's desk in her office overlooking the garden

*Vintage finds
are beautifully
offset by a
palette of
calming whites
and greys*





OPPOSITE Gilli's elegant 18th- and 19th-century French antiques, country furniture and pretty accessories create an eclectic display in her shop at Station Mill in Chipping Norton

in Normandy, takes centre stage amid old books and flea-market chairs, adorned with cushions made by Gilli from vintage fabrics. In the attic bedroom, reached by a secondary twisting staircase from the sitting room, antique monogrammed linen sheets are stored in old chests and suitcases. "I enjoy the thrill of stumbling upon armoires full to the brim with handcrafted trousseaux. There is something very special about these pieces," she explains.

Gilli has a talent for creating eye-catching still-life arrangements that bring additional character and charm to every room. In the study, for example, there are exquisite aged legal documents and



THIS PAGE From fine china to simple rustic earthenware, and idiosyncratic oil paintings to engraved prints, exciting finds on trips to France provide Gilli with an array of covetable stock

ancient volumes, decorative plates, delicate handmade lace and religious ephemera alongside other quirky treasures sourced from *vide-greniers* (house clearances) and brocantes across France.

"The cottage is our perfect space, regardless of the season," Gilli says. "In winter, we sit by the fire in the kitchen with the log burner crackling and candles burning, wondering about who lived here before us. In summer, I love lying in the upstairs sitting room with the windows flung open and the sun streaming in, gazing out at the walnut tree opposite and the countryside beyond."

1 *Gilli Hanna Decorative Antiques, Station Mill Antiques & Interiors, Station Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire (07771 766055; gillihanna-antiques.co.uk). Also at The Old Flight House, Weston-on-the-Green, Oxfordshire (theoldflighthouse.co.uk). You can read about Gilli's travels around France in search of vintage finds in her blog, The Diary of a Brocanteuse, on her website.*



STYLE

*Relaxed formality; including
ornamental kitchen garden,
flowering meadows and wooded
valley garden*

SEASONS OF INTEREST

*Blossom and bulbs in spring;
flower-filled borders in summer*

SIZE

*Three acres, plus five-acre
wooded valley*

SOIL TYPE

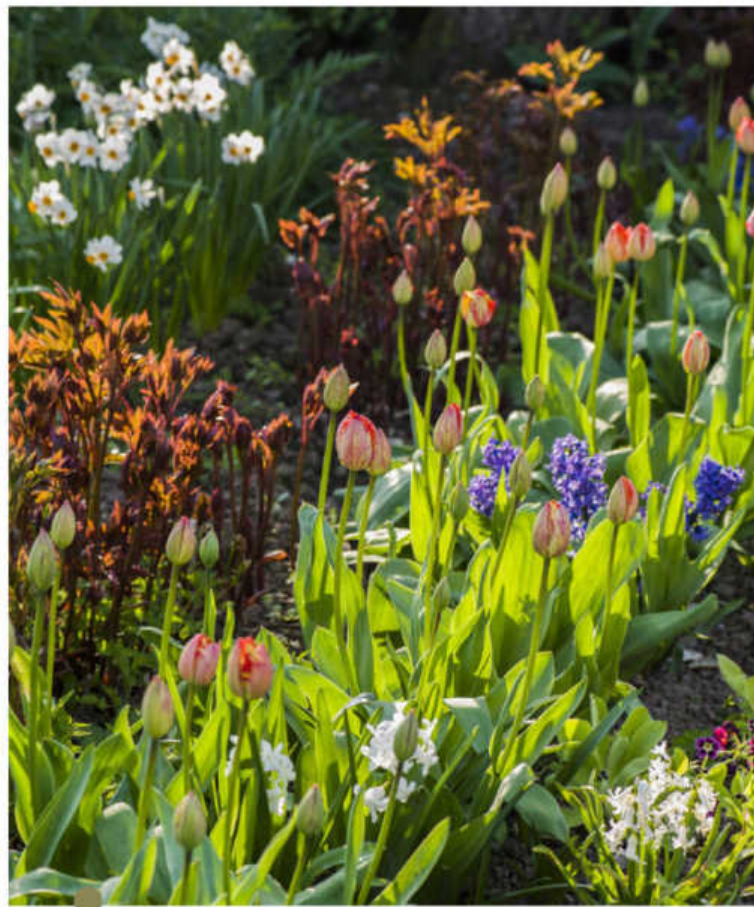
*Neutral, well-drained,
fertile loam*



A magical MIX

Spring blooms and blossom abound in a beautiful Herefordshire valley garden, where an enchanting variety of areas and planting schemes reflects an appreciation of the artistry of nature

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLE DRAKE



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A brick path through the kitchen garden leads to a gate into the fields beyond; rows of tulips, narcissi, hyacinths and the bronze shoots of peonies in the cutting garden; near the house, grass paths separate beds filled with spring blooms **OPPOSITE, TOP** The terrace overflows with white tulips and self-seeded forget-me-nots beneath a spreading cherry tree **BOTTOM** Striking silver-leaved cardoons

It seems ironic that Rosanna Bulmer and her husband David, of the famous cider-making family, were once told that the land around their beautiful old farmhouse on the northern slopes of the Wye Valley in Herefordshire was at too high an altitude for them to grow cider-apple trees successfully. Since moving to Brilley Court Farm in the late 1970s, they have planted hundreds of other trees, though, including orchards of dessert apples, an avenue of sweet chestnuts, fields of oaks and many, many others. The surrounding area, close to the Welsh border and a stone's throw from the literary town of Hay-on-Wye, is blessed with fertile soil and is, of course, renowned for its cider-apple orchards.

The tumbledown Grade II-listed farmhouse – a patchwork of different additions around a 17th-century core – needed a lot of work to make it habitable when they first moved here. The internal floors were flagstones laid directly onto earth, so when lifted during restoration, they were taken outside and used for terraces. The farmyard was transformed into an undulating lawn framed with lushly planted borders and a swimming pool was tucked inside the barns, sheltered and unseen. These days, in spring the gravel between the flagstones throws up a mass of self-seeded forget-me-nots, cowslips, blue and white muscari and Welsh poppies.

“Both my mother and grandmother were good gardeners, so I picked it up by osmosis,” Rosanna says. “My grandmother even made a wild garden at a time when they were quite unfashionable.” It turned out to be a favourable place to establish a garden – it has wonderful views but is sheltered on three sides from prevailing winds, with rich but well-draining soil, and plenty of beautifully coloured stone lying around the farm with which to build walls.

When Rosanna began making her garden, she admits that she



had quite set ideas about how it should look: "I loved Sissinghurst, so I wanted the planting around the house to be predominantly white, green and grey, but most of the grey-leaved plants rotted from the wet and cold as they need a warm, dry location to flourish." Older and wiser, her advice to novice gardeners nowadays is to walk around their neighbourhoods and see what does well in other people's plots: "Understand your conditions and work with them rather than trying to impose a predetermined plan – that way, you save yourself money and a lot of disappointment."

The ornamental kitchen garden, after several moves, eventually came to rest outside the original boundary, on a favourable south-west-facing slope. "We raised box cuttings ourselves for the hedges, and bought in a beautiful mature apple tree from a neighbouring farm as the centrepiece," Rosanna says. Ornamentals sneak in here, too, with pink tulip 'Ballade' contrasting with silvery cardoons, and forget-me-nots filling in any gaps between.

One of the garden's spring highlights is the display of flowers emerging from the curving grassy lawns that wrap around the farmhouse, particularly the enchanting duet of cowslips and *Fritillaria meleagris*. "I wanted snake's head fritillaries here because I remembered seeing them growing wild in Sussex as a child," Rosanna recalls. "Fortunately, they seem to love the conditions and have naturalised." Pheasant's-eye narcissi and cuckoo flower are in the mix, too, and in summer ox-eye daisies, red campion and wild carrot continue the display.

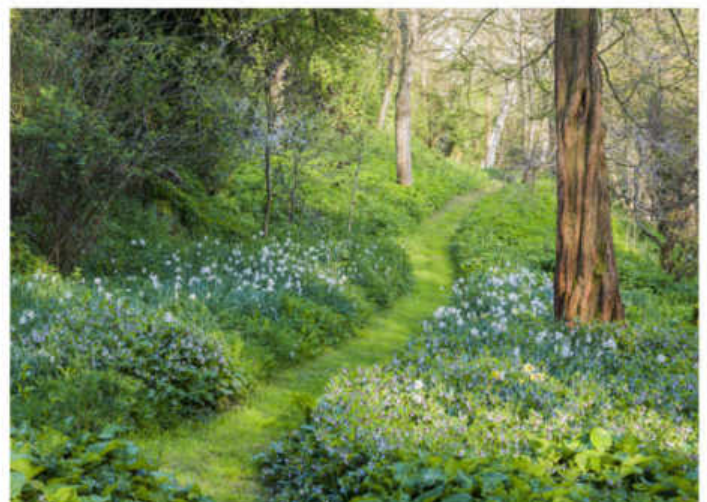
In the mid 1980s, Rosanna turned her attention to the wild garden, at that time a virtually impenetrable five-acre valley with a stream running through it – a thick tangle of nettles and brambles below tall self-seeded ash and sycamore. "It was a jungle, so we hired a mini digger to clear it and created upper and lower





paths and top and bottom ponds,” she explains. After all the debris had been removed, specimen trees were planted, including metasequoia, taxodium, snakebark and paperbark maples, and *Magnolia wilsonii*, their positions established by Rosanna with the assistance of nurseryman and friend Jamie Chichester using canes. There are rhododendrons here, too – large-leaved forms with pale, scented flowers and peeling bark, and great clumps of *Gunnera manicata*. This is one of Rosanna’s favourite parts of the garden now: “Increasingly, the effects I like best are those created by nature, particularly the combination of bluebells and stitchwort. It’s magical.” This is also a great area for wildlife, a passion shared with gardener David Roberts who has worked with Rosanna for the past 14 years.

It was a visit to Cotehele, the National Trust property in Cornwall’s Tamar Valley, that inspired Rosanna to create a cutting garden: “I love having flowers in the house and I also like to trial plants to see how they perform before deciding where to place them in the garden, particularly the David Austin English roses.” At its centre, the interwoven branches of four *Sorbus aria* ‘Lutescens’ mark the crossing point of paths between beds in which lines of tulips, narcissi and hyacinths stand waiting to be cut and taken into the house for arranging. Rosanna has a great fondness for tulips: “The old-fashioned shapes – such as lily flowered, peony and viridiflora varieties – are my favourites, and I like the contrast of pale and dark colours together – the ivory



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The pond in the valley garden with pink rhododendron, unfurling *Gunnera manicata* and *Acer pseudoplatanus* ‘Brilliantissimum’ bursting into leaf; mauve honesty and pale narcissi; a carpet of comfrey and narcissi flanks the grassy path leading down to the pond; *Tulipa* ‘Fontainebleau’

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP A pretty stream runs through the garden, providing ideal conditions for boggy, water-loving plants; the rustic summerhouse is a lovely location for springtime picnics; a host of beautiful *Narcissus poeticus*; steps lead down to the blue bridge across the stream at the bottom of the wooded valley

CREATING A SPRING MEADOW

Use plug plants to introduce cowslips, snake's head fritillaries, lady's smock, bugle and self heal into existing grass areas, or raise them from seed as a cheaper option.

Do not cut the meadow until July so that plants have a good length of time to set and disperse their seeds.

Remove grass cuttings as fertility needs to be kept low and these would enrich the soil.

If coarse grasses are dominant, try introducing the annual wild flower yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), which is semi-parasitic on grasses.

If you sow a spring meadow mix on bare ground, it is important to mow the area in the first year after sowing.

streaked 'Spring Green' with velvety maroon 'Queen of Night' for instance." Fed and watered well after flowering, some of the tulips happily bloom again, year after year, without being lifted.

As time has passed, the garden at Brilley Court has gradually become softer around the edges and less defined. Rosanna's gardening 'journey' is summed up by the fact that while she began by emulating Sissinghurst, she cites Dan Pearson's naturalistic slice of the grounds at Chatsworth as her favourite garden at last year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show: "It was a real joy that it was so much less manicured than the other gardens. I increasingly love the wild aspect of it all. Over the years I've become a much more relaxed gardener. It's a delightful surprise!" 🌱

📍 *Brilley Court, Brilley, Whitney-on-Wye, Herefordshire. Open for the National Gardens Scheme on 1 May 2016 (ngs.org.uk) and by appointment from March to October.*

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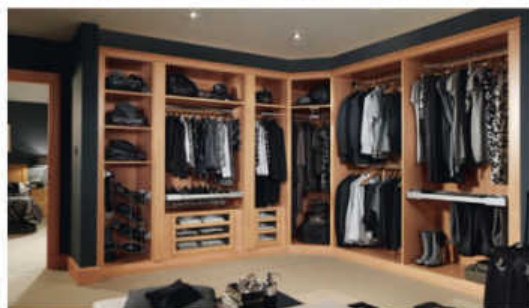
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OPPOSITE Piscola
TOP LEFT Batura
THIS PICTURE Archivo
(in alcove); Callan Brick
(on floor)

Now spring is here, our thoughts turn to how to bring a fresh new look to our homes. One way to invigorate a tired decorating scheme is by retiling a floor or wall in a distinctive shade or pattern. Whether you want to introduce a contemporary band of colour to a kitchen or add a touch of classic style to a living room, Topps Tiles can provide all the inspiration and information you need for your home-improvement project. As the UK's leading tile specialist, with more than 330 retail outlets across Britain, it offers a wide selection of high-quality products, including natural stone flooring. Sourcing its ranges from around the world, Topps Tiles is continually launching exciting collections of new designs, many exclusive to the company. Piscola (opposite) is a variegated slate with flashes of copper and its rich tones would suit any modern rustic home, while the hand-decorated effect of Archivo (on wall, right) beautifully complements a country property. If you prefer a neutral scheme, Batura (above), with its larger dimensions, works well on floors and walls, stylishly creating the effect of wood and aged stone.

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AN IRISH feast

Food writer Rachel Allen creates mouthwatering dishes from her homeland using traditional ingredients with a modern twist

RECIPES BY RACHEL ALLEN ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAJA SMEND ● FOOD AND DRINK EDITOR ALISON WALKER





 *Turn the page for recipe*

SPAGHETTI WITH CLAMS AND WILD GARLIC

Preparation 20 minutes

Cooking 10 minutes Serves 4

A super-fast, super-delicious pasta dish that gets its inspiration from the Italian *spaghetti alle vongole*. Use lots of chives in place of the wild garlic when not in season.

1 generous tsp salt
325g dried spaghetti or
400g fresh spaghetti
1kg clams in their shells,
 well washed and scrubbed
60ml gin
3 garlic cloves, peeled and
 sliced very thinly
160ml double cream
4 tbsp chopped wild garlic,
 plus **2** tbsp to serve
 juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon

- 1 Place a medium-to-large pan of water on to boil and add the salt. When it starts to boil, add the pasta, stir and cook for 8 minutes (for dried pasta) or until al dente.
- 2 Strain, leaving 50ml of the cooking water in the pan, then return the spaghetti to the pan. Set aside while you cook the clams (or you can cook them while the spaghetti is cooking).
- 3 Place the clams, gin and sliced garlic in a large wide saucepan on a medium-to-high heat, cover with a lid and cook for 3-4 minutes until the clams have opened. Discard any that remain closed. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, pick out the clams and drop them into the spaghetti.
- 4 Add the cream to the sliced garlic and gin and boil for 1-2 minutes until slightly thickened (not too thick or you'll need to add a splash of water), then add the wild garlic and lemon juice.
- 5 Tip the spaghetti and clams into the sauce, then stir over the heat for a few seconds. Serve with extra wild garlic sprinkled over the top.



BEER BREAD WITH CARAMELISED ONIONS AND BLUE CHEESE

Preparation 35 minutes,

plus rising Cooking 1 hour

45 minutes Makes 2 loaves

This is a big, gutsy bread if ever there was one.

15g fresh yeast or **7g** dried
15g caster sugar
330ml red beer or ale
500g strong white flour,
 plus extra for dusting
1 tsp salt
550g onions, peeled and sliced
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
2 tbsp Dijon mustard
100g grated Cheddar cheese
75g crumbled blue cheese

- 1 Place the yeast in a bowl with the sugar and beer. Stir to

mix, then leave to stand in a warm place for 5 minutes.

- 2 Sift the flour and salt into a bowl (or that of a stand mixer), then stir in the beer and yeast mixture. Mix well. Add a light dusting of flour to the worktop, then turn out the dough and knead for 10 minutes (or for 5-6 minutes using the dough hook in the mixer). Put in a bowl, cover with clingfilm and place somewhere warm (but not above 36°C) for $1\frac{1}{2}$ -3 hours to rise. The dough should have more than doubled in size and have bubbles on top by the end.
- 3 While the dough is rising, cook the onions in the olive oil in a wide pan, uncovered, on a low heat for 1 hour or

until caramelised and rich golden brown, stirring every 5 minutes or so to scrape the bottom of the pan. Stir in the mustard.

- 4 Uncover and knock the bread back by punching it in, then knead for 1 minute on the worktop. Divide in two and pat out each piece into a round about 25.5cm in diameter. Place the onions, mustard and both cheeses in the centre of each. Bring the edges of the dough into the centre and knead for a few seconds. Pat into rounds again.
- 5 Dust a baking tray with flour. Turn the loaves upside down and flatten out so they are about 3cm high. Place side by side on

the tray, then dust with flour and slash with a knife. Cover with a dry tea towel and leave somewhere warm (not above 36°C). The loaves should rise to 1½-2 times their original volume – this will take about 45 minutes.

- 6 Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan oven) gas mark 7. Remove the tea towel and transfer the tray to the oven and cook for 5 minutes. Turn the temperature down to 200°C (180°C) gas mark 6; cook for 30-40 minutes until the loaves sound hollow when tapped on the base. Cool on a wire rack.

BALLYMALOE ROAST RACK OF LAMB WITH FRESH APPLE AND MINT CHUTNEY

Preparation 20 minutes

Cooking 35 minutes Serves 4-6

A rack is a tender cut of lamb that, once prepared, is easy to serve. The chutney is especially good with sweet lamb.

**2 racks of spring lamb
(6-8 cutlets each)**

FOR THE CHUTNEY

1 large cooking apple, peeled and cored

handful of fresh mint leaves

50g onions, peeled and roughly chopped

20g-50g caster sugar

pinch cayenne pepper

- 1 Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C) gas mark 7. Score the fat of the racks into 2-3cm squares. Season and place on a roasting tray, fat side up.
- 2 Roast for 25-35 minutes, depending on the degree of 'doneness' required. When cooked, remove to a warm dish. Turn off the oven and leave to rest for 5-10 minutes.
- 3 Meanwhile, put the apple, mint, onions and sugar in a food processor and whizz to combine, then season with salt and cayenne pepper.
- 4 Carve the lamb and serve 2-3 cutlets per person with the chutney.





HONEY AND MINT BUTTERMILK ICE CREAM

Preparation 20 minutes, plus freezing Cooking 10 minutes Serves 4

The tart buttermilk balances beautifully with the sweet honey and fresh mint.

4 egg yolks
85g caster or granulated sugar
4 full-leafed sprigs of fresh mint, plus extra to serve
225ml double cream
85g honey

225ml buttermilk
pinch of salt

- 1 In a bowl and using an electric whisk, whisk the egg yolks with 35g of the sugar until the mixture is thick and mousse-like.
- 2 Remove the leaves from the mint sprigs and roughly chop. Place the double cream, honey and remaining sugar in a saucepan on a medium heat with the chopped mint leaves. Stir until the sugar and honey are fully dissolved and the cream

just begins to boil ever so gently. This is called the shivery stage, as the surface of the mixture looks like it's slightly 'shivering'.

- 3 Once the cream is ready, slowly pour it into the egg yolk and sugar mixture, whisking as you pour.
- 4 Return the mixture to the saucepan and cook slowly on a low heat, stirring all the time, making sure it doesn't get too hot and scramble. You might need to take it off the heat every so often if you think it's

warming up too much. When the mixture becomes thick and coats the back of a wooden spoon, remove the pan from the heat, pour through a sieve and leave to cool.

- 5 Once cool, whisk in the buttermilk and salt. Pour the mixture into an ice-cream machine and blend until thick and smooth, then freeze in a freezerproof container.
- 6 Serve with a chiffonade (very thin ribbon) of fresh mint over the top. ➔



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CARRAGEEN PANNA COTTA

*Preparation 15 minutes, plus setting
Cooking 5 minutes
Serves 4-6*

This takes its influence from the classic Italian panna cotta (which means cooked cream), but, instead of being set with gelatine, it uses the Irish seaweed carrageen (which, incidentally, means 'little rock', because when the tide goes out, that's exactly where it can be found).

8g carrageen
400ml double cream
200ml milk

50g caster or granulated sugar, plus extra for sprinkling
1 tsp vanilla extract or 1 vanilla pod, slightly split
fresh raspberries, and hulled and quartered strawberries, to serve

- 1 Put a small plate in your freezer. Place the carrageen in a bowl, cover with tepid water and soak for 10 minutes.
- 2 Drain, then put the carrageen in a saucepan with the cream, milk, sugar and vanilla pod (if using). Don't add the
- extract just yet. Stir on a medium heat and bring to the boil, then cover, turn the heat down and simmer for 5 minutes. Take off the heat.
- 3 Take the plate out of the freezer and place a small spoonful of the carrageen mixture on it, then pop it back in the freezer for 1 minute. Take out and run your finger through it – it should be set. If it is still runny, place back on the heat and cook for a further minute before testing again.
- 4 Pour the mixture through a sieve (you can wash the

vanilla pod and use it again another time) but don't push the seaweed through, just the liquid that is clinging to it. Scrape the mixture from under the sieve and, using a whisk, mix it with the drained cream mixture and the vanilla extract (if using). Pour into four or six small bowls or glasses and place in the fridge to set.

- 5 Serve with some raspberries or sliced strawberries (which have been scattered with sugar) on top.



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The Bio Live range tastes so good that the Yeo Valley executive chef Paul Collins was inspired to come up with a No Added Refined Sugar Granola (see recipe, right) as an ideal accompaniment. And, just as healthy eating needn't be a chore, exercise can also be fun, which is why the Yeo Valley team (pictured) has taken to doing Yeo-ga while enjoying the great outdoors – much to the bewilderment of the family herd.

To download the Yeo-ga workout, find out more about the Bio Live range along with recipes and tips for a healthier Yeo, visit yeovalley.co.uk/ahealthieryeo.

Yeo Valley believes in good food, good company and good fun!



NO ADDED REFINED SUGAR GRANOLA

Makes around 370g (about 8 portions)

Enjoy this healthy recipe by Yeo Valley executive chef Paul Collins with Bio Live yogurt for a crunchy, creamy treat at any time of day.

30g coconut oil
200g raw whole rolled oats
50g chopped raw nuts
50g seeds such as pumpkin, linseed, sesame, sunflower, pumpkin
75g dried prunes
2 tbsp honey
pinch of salt

- 1 Preheat the oven to 170°C. The coconut oil might be liquid or solid depending on the temperature of the room. If it's solid, warm it up in a pan on a low temperature, or microwave for a few seconds to melt it. Then use your hands to combine all the ingredients in a large mixing bowl.
- 2 The mixture will be a bit sticky. Be sure to mix the oil well through the other ingredients, so there aren't any chunks of oil left in the mixture. Spread it in a thin layer on a baking tray lined

with greaseproof paper and bake for 10-15 minutes until very lightly toasted.

- 3 You can make this recipe completely raw by placing the mixture in a dehydrator or a low oven for 5-6 hours at 45°C. (The raw version of this recipe doesn't last as long as if it were baked.) Add any other types of dried fruit, nuts or seeds that you like, then top with your favourite Yeo Bio Live Yogurt for a delicious snack or breakfast – this is a crunchy, creamy treat with no added refined sugar, and it's easy-peasy to make, too.
- 4 Remember to cool before serving or storing. This granola can be kept in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to 2 weeks, so it's perfect for a batch cook to have ready for those days when time is of the essence.



The Bio Live range is available from March 2016 in selected stores. See countryliving.co.uk to read about Yeo Valley's online dating partnership with Country Living.

EASTER TREATS

Create the perfect afternoon tea for friends and family with this tempting array of homemade delights

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY ALISON WALKER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY TARA FISHER • STYLING BY WEI TANG



SPICED EASTER BISCUITS

Preparation 30 minutes, plus

chilling Cooking 12 minutes

Makes 20-25

Originating from the West Country, these lightly spiced biscuits were traditionally given as a gift on Easter Day.

300g plain flour

150g icing sugar

1 tsp mixed spice

175g cold butter, diced

1 medium egg, beaten

with 1 tbsp cold water

125g currants

1 egg white

caster sugar, for dredging

- 1 Whizz the flour, icing sugar, spice and butter in a food processor until it resembles breadcrumbs.
- 2 With the motor running, gradually add the beaten egg until the mixture clumps together.
- 5 Turn out on a lightly floured worksurface and knead in the currants. Flatten the dough into a disc and wrap in clingfilm. Chill for 30 minutes until it is firm enough to roll out.
- 4 Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven) gas mark 4. Lightly flour the worksurface again and roll out the dough until it is 4mm thick. Stamp out circles with a 6-7cm fluted cutter and arrange, spaced apart, on 2-3 lightly greased baking sheets.
- 5 Whisk the egg white with a fork until frothy. Brush over the biscuits and sprinkle with sugar. Bake for 10-12 minutes until lightly golden. Cool on a wire rack. They will keep for up to a week in an airtight container.





RHUBARB AND CUSTARD CHOUX PUFFS

Preparation 45 minutes Cooking 40 minutes Makes 12

The classic pairing of rhubarb and custard is used to fill light-as-a-feather choux-pastry puffs.

FOR THE CHOUX PASTRY

75g butter, diced
100g plain flour, sifted
three times

3 medium eggs, beaten
25g flaked almonds

FOR THE CREME PATISSIERE

300ml whole milk
2 medium egg yolks
55g caster sugar
20g plain flour
20g cornflour
½ tsp vanilla extract

150ml whipping cream,
lightly whipped

TO FINISH

2 tbsp rhubarb compote
icing sugar, to dust

1 First make the choux pastry. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan oven) gas mark 7. Line 1-2 large baking sheets with baking parchment.

2 Put the butter and 200ml water in a medium pan. Bring slowly to the boil – the butter should melt before the water boils.

3 Add the flour and beat well with a wooden spoon until the mixture leaves the side of the pan. Spread out onto a plate and leave to cool.

4 Return the mixture to the pan, then gradually beat in the eggs with a wooden spoon – it will become thick

and glossy and should drop reluctantly from the spoon. Alternatively, use a mixer on medium speed.

5 Fill a piping bag, fitted with a large open-star nozzle, with the pastry mixture. Pipe 12 large mounds (6cm diameter) onto the baking sheets. Scatter with a few flaked almonds. Bake for about 20-25 minutes until golden and risen. With a skewer, make a small hole in the base and return to the oven for 5 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

6 While the puffs are cooling, make the crème pâtissière. Bring the milk to just under the boil. Mix the yolks with the sugar in a bowl until blended. Stir in the flours

and gradually stir in the milk. Return the mixture to the pan and slowly bring to the boil until it thickens. If it goes lumpy, keep beating with a wooden spoon until smooth. Stir in the vanilla extract. Transfer to a bowl, cover the surface with greaseproof paper to stop a skin forming and chill.

7 Tip the crème pâtissière into a food processor and whizz until smooth. Transfer to a bowl and fold in the cream. Stir in spoonfuls of compote for a rippled effect.

8 Cut the puffs in half horizontally and put a spoonful of the rhubarb filling onto each base. Top with the lid and dust with icing sugar, then serve. **3**

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APRICOT AND LAVENDER FRIDGE CAKE

Preparation 20 minutes, plus chilling Cooking 5 minutes

Makes about 950g

Savoirdi are also called boudoir, or ladyfinger sponge fingers. If preferred, you can use the same weight of trifle sponges.

400g lavender-flavoured chocolate, broken into pieces
125g unsalted butter, diced
75ml double cream
175g soft dried apricots, diced
150g Savoirdi sponge fingers, diced
cocoa powder, for dusting

1 Line the base and sides of a 13cm x 27cm shallow

traybake tin (or a tin of similar dimensions) with baking parchment.

- 2 Put the chocolate, butter and cream into a pan and melt gently until combined. Stir once or twice until smooth.
- 3 Put the apricots and sponge fingers into a large bowl. Pour over two-thirds of the chocolate mixture

and stir until well combined. Tip into the prepared traybake tin and level with the back of a spoon, pushing into the corners.

- 4 Pour the remaining chocolate over the top and smooth out to level. Chill in the fridge until set.
- 5 To serve, dust liberally with cocoa powder. Remove from the tin and cut widthways into thin slices. Serve with coffee. ➔

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EARL GREY AND LEMON HOT-CROSS BUNS

Preparation 40 minutes, plus soaking and rising

Cooking 30 minutes Makes 9

Leave the dough to prove overnight in the fridge for an even better flavour – bring to room temperature before shaping.

100g currants
125ml hot Earl Grey tea
150ml-200ml whole milk
20g fresh yeast or
10g dried yeast
50g caster sugar
75g butter
500g strong white flour
2 tsp mixed spice
1 tsp ground cardamom
zest 1 large lemon
2 medium eggs, beaten
25g mixed candied peel

FOR THE CROSSES

30g plain flour mixed into a paste with 2 tbsp cold water

TO GLAZE

1 tbsp golden granulated sugar

- 1 Soak the currants in the tea in a bowl overnight.
- 2 Put the milk in a small pan and heat gently until warm. Blend the yeast with a splash of the milk and 1 tsp of the sugar, and leave for 10 minutes or so until frothy.
- 3 Melt the butter in the remaining milk and set aside to cool slightly. Drain the soaked fruit, reserving any liquid.
- 4 Sift the flour and spices into a large bowl with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt. Stir in the remaining sugar and lemon zest. Make a well in the centre and stir in the yeasted mixture, beaten eggs, milk and enough of the reserved tea with a wooden spoon to make a soft but not too sticky dough.
- 5 Tip the dough onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for 10 minutes until smooth. Alternatively, use the dough hook on a food mixer at 2 minutes on slow speed, then 7 minutes on medium speed. Add the currants and candied peel and knead briefly until incorporated. Put the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover and leave to rise for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours until doubled in size.
- 6 Tip the dough onto the work surface and knock back and knead for a

- couple of minutes to redistribute the air bubbles. Divide into 9 equal pieces and shape into balls. Transfer to a lightly greased baking sheet, cover with a tea towel and leave to prove for 20-30 minutes until doubled in size.
- 7 Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan oven) gas mark 6. Put the flour paste into a small piping bag and pipe crosses onto each bun. Bake for 25-30 minutes until golden and the bottoms sound hollow when tapped. Transfer to a wire rack.
- 8 While the buns are still hot, dissolve the sugar in 1 tbsp boiling water and boil for 1 minute. Brush over the buns for a sticky glaze.



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COCONUT AND CHOCOLATE MACAROONS

Preparation 20 minutes

Cooking 15 minutes Makes 20

These are very simple to make and a good way to use up leftover egg whites.

2 medium egg whites

100g caster sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract

130g desiccated coconut

melted plain chocolate, for drizzling

- 1 Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven) gas mark 4. Line 1-2 large baking sheets with parchment.
- 2 Whisk the egg whites with a pinch of salt until frothy. (Use leftover yolks to make mayonnaise or custard.) Whisk in the sugar 1 tbsp at a time, followed by the vanilla extract.
- 3 Fold in the desiccated coconut in three batches. Put dessertspoons of the mixture onto the baking sheets, spaced apart and piled up slightly into mounds. Bake in the oven for 12-15 minutes until set and lightly golden. Cool on a wire rack.
- 4 When the macaroons are cold, use a teaspoon to drizzle them with melted chocolate. They will keep for up to two weeks in an airtight container. 🍪



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WIDE-AWAKE CLUB

Does the change in the clocks make it harder for you to nod off? Research suggests that even a small disruption to sleep cycles can affect your mental abilities. A recent study in *The Journal of Neuroscience* found that the loss of one night's sleep caused changes in the brain, making it harder to concentrate and regulate emotions. And neuroscientists at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, discovered that people were better at remembering names and faces if they'd had the recommended eight hours. For a good night's rest, make sure your room is as quiet and dark as possible. Don't check phones or tablets before bedtime, as the light can interfere with the production of sleep hormones.

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health notes



NEW FAVOURITE

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Boost your wellbeing the natural way with our round-up from the world of health and beauty

SOUPS AREN'T JUST FOR WINTER – they are a simple way to make a nutritious lunch any time of year. With recipes such as Spinach, Oat & Hazelnut Milk and Turkey & Quinoa with Peas, *Skinny Soups* by Kathryn Bruton (Kyle Books, £14.99) is packed with unusual but delicious ideas.

IF YOU HAVE A SORE THROAT, try new Neal's Yard Remedies Organic Elderberry & Propolis Throat Spray (£15, nealsyardremedies.com). Elderberry is full of antioxidants, while propolis and honey can help to protect and soothe.

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Preserving *your* health

An ancient way of storing fresh produce, the fermenting process transforms simple ingredients into superfoods with major nutritional benefits

WORDS BY KATE LANGRISH • PHOTOGRAPHS BY NATO WELTON • STYLING BY LUCY ATTWATER

LONG BEFORE PASTEURISATION, canning and freezing, people used the processes of fermentation to preserve fresh produce during seasonal gluts so they could harness the benefits of their nutrients in leaner months. Every culture has its own fermenting tradition, from Korea's kimchi (pickled cabbage) and Japan's miso (fermented soya) to China's kombucha (fermented tea) and the pickles of northern and eastern Europe such as sauerkraut. And while these names may be new to you now, they'll soon become more familiar because fermented foods are being hailed by experts as the latest superfoods.

The fermentation process relies on bacteria and, in these days of antibacterial wipes, hand sanitisers and even germ-killing washing powders, it's easy to think of bacteria as the enemy, but we are actually more bacteria than we are human. "For every cell in your body there are ten bacteria living in the gut. That's why the balance of bacteria is so crucial to your health in general," explains nutritionist Dr Marilyn Glenville (marilynglenville.com).

Increasingly, scientists are discovering how bacteria – particularly in the gut – play a vital role in our health, affecting digestion, immunity

and potentially our mood. Some experts are even starting to think that the sterile nature of our diet could be a factor in the rising obesity epidemic and increasing numbers of people suffering from allergic conditions.

"Fermented foods deliver those beneficial bacteria, enzymes, nutrients and detoxifiers that our immune systems and digestive tracts need," explains Charlotte Pike, author of *Fermented* (Kyle Books, £16.99). "Instead of buying expensive supplements, by eating and drinking fermented foods, over time you will see a real improvement in your overall health and wellbeing, physically, mentally and emotionally." 🍷

WHAT ARE FERMENTED FOODS?

Food can be fermented by bacteria (eg yogurt and kimchi), yeast (eg wine and beer), mould (eg Stilton or Brie) or a combination of these (such as sourdough). But they work on the same principle, where the micro-organisms, known as the 'starter', are introduced to the carbohydrate and left for a period of time for the 'fermenting' to take place. Some foods, such as the cabbage in sauerkraut, already contain the starter necessary for fermentation and only need to be left to their own devices, whereas others, like the fermented tea kombucha, need a starter introduced. "These micro-organisms convert carbohydrates in foods, such as starches or sugars, into alcohols or acids, which serve as a natural preservative," explains nutritionist Adam Elabd (adamelabd.com), author of *Fermenting Foods Step-by-Step**. "Fermenting also makes the food become more nutrient-dense and digestible, which is what turns it into a 'superfood'."

GUT REACTION

The probiotic supplements and yogurt drinks on supermarket shelves are packed with good bacteria – and fermented foods are a type of natural probiotic, containing many of the same bacteria and more. "The bacteria in fermented foods add to the diversity and population of your gut flora, and helps to fend off the micro-organisms that bring about disease," Adam Elabd says. Unlike supplements, fermented foods come with the added bonus of having started the breakdown of food before it even hits the gut. "This makes the nutrients more absorbable, as well as creating some that may not have even existed in the original food," he adds.

Gluten is a good example. With rising numbers of people claiming to have an intolerance to wheat, the process of fermentation in sourdough takes some of the pressure off the digestive system. Many people find that bread makes them feel uncomfortable and bloated, but are surprised to discover sourdough doesn't have the same effect. "Sourdough is easier to digest than most other breads," Charlotte Pike explains. "Fermenting grains, such as wheat flour, by creating a sourdough starter breaks down the phytic acid, making vitamins and minerals in the grain more available for our bodies to absorb."

Fermented foods may benefit those suffering from food intolerances and digestive issues, such as irritable bowel syndrome. "Bacteria form an important barrier in your gut between the food you eat and the rest of your body. If this is thrown out of balance, the gut can become inflamed and more porous or 'leaky', so it starts letting particles straight into the bloodstream," says Dr John Briffa (drbriffa.com). "Your body may then create immune reactions to fight them, and this is believed to be the basis for food intolerances."

With 70 per cent of the immune system in the gut, they may also support health in more indirect

Enjoy health benefits by incorporating fermented foods, such as (clockwise, from left) green tea, cider vinegar, sauerkraut and yogurt, into your diet



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ways, too. "Any conditions that are caused or exacerbated by a compromised microflora may improve with fermented foods," Adam Elabd says. "Many digestive, skin, inflammatory, metabolic and cognitive disorders have their root causes in the gut."

Indeed, a study by the Griffith Health Institute and School of Medicine in Australia found that regularly eating probiotic yogurt lowered blood pressure; while research published in the journal *Nutrition Research* showed that not only did fermented kimchi have a significant impact on the weight and body fat of the overweight patients being studied, it also improved blood sugar levels.

Perhaps more interestingly, there's increasing evidence to show how healthy gut bacteria is linked to mood and behaviour. A study in *Psychiatry Research* revealed that people who ate more fermented foods had fewer symptoms of social anxiety, a phobia of social conditions such as meeting strangers or talking in groups.

HOME BREWS

To really get the most from fermented foods, you need to make them yourself or look for small-scale producers fermenting in traditional ways. "Many examples, such as sauerkraut, vinegar and pickles, are often pasteurised to increase shelf-life at room temperature and allow for long periods of shipping and storage. The vast majority of foods sold in grocery stores these days are essentially sterile," Adam Elabd reveals. "Homemade is always best and the most potent. Large-scale production often involves using isolated strains of probiotics, which means less diversity, even if the label touts many billions of live-active-cultures."

By their very nature, fermented foods can be potent, so start by adding them slowly to your diet – a tablespoon or two a day – or they can upset your stomach. "After a week or two, you should be able to consume larger amounts, but bear in mind that most are used as condiments or side dishes, not main courses," he adds. As all the different ferments have their own set of micro-organisms, which in turn have their own benefits, the key to reaping the full rewards of fermented foods is to add a variety of these superfoods to your diet. Sauerkraut, anyone? 

***READER OFFER: Fermenting Foods Step-by-Step by Adam Elabd (DK, £12.99) is available to CL readers at 50% discount, including P&P. Call 01206 256165 and quote 'DKCountrylive'. Offer ends 30 April 2016.**

TOP FIVE FERMENTED FOODS TO TRY

Sauerkraut Natural bacteria in cabbage ferments in brine to create this German favourite

Kimchi Korean cabbage and vegetables are traditionally packed into pots and left underground for months to ferment

Yogurt The simplest fermented food to try making at home

Sourdough Bacteria in flour combines with natural yeasts in the air to create a sourdough starter

Apple cider vinegar Look for vinegars that contain the 'mother culture', which means they still have the active microbes



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next month in COUNTRY LIVING

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Country style Look good this month

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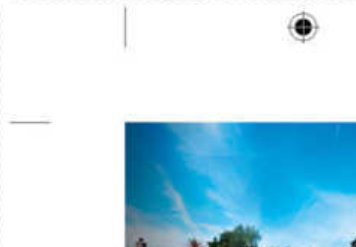
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- Deckchairs for mariners.
- Blue garden furniture?
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Send your answers on a postcard to: CPCNLP16000, Hearst Magazines UK, The Data Solutions Centre, Worksp S80 2RT. The closing date for entries is 30th April 2016. NB: One entry per household. Not open to employees of Hearst Magazines UK (or their relatives).





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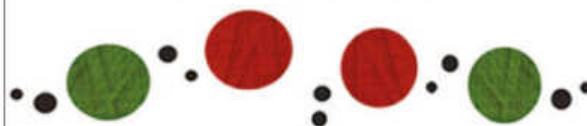
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Hands up all those who feel they're in a constant battle to achieve and maintain the weight they want to be. How many diets have you tried and failed, feeling totally frustrated and not knowing what to do next?

Having had a weight problem for 35 years, Rachel was desperate to find a way of being able to lose weight once and for all. 'I had just about resigned myself to the fact that I would be overweight for the rest of my life, when I came across the principles of the Metabolic Weight Loss Programme. I followed these and to my amazement, I lost 3 stone in just over 3 months and then went on to successfully maintain my weight. The relief was enormous to have found something that finally worked for me.'

Rachel became passionate about wanting to help as many people as possible with their weight problems, which led her to become a qualified weight loss consultant. In the last 12 years, she has helped over 4,000 clients from all walks of life to help bring their dieting days to an end once and for all. Clients' ages range from 8 to 90 years, so there is hope for everyone!

A sustainable way to lose your weight and keep it off

One of the popular aspects of the Metabolic Weight Loss Programme is there's nothing faddish about it. There are no meal replacements, diet shakes or diet pills. All the foods on the programme are easily obtainable. Clients frequently say just how easy it is to follow, they don't feel hungry and are not having to constantly battle with cravings. The four stages of the programme are tailored as necessary to provide the maximum results for each client.

'This isn't an open-ended slimming club,' says Rachel. 'We set your target weight at the beginning and then get on with the business of helping you lose the weight, addressing any difficulties along the way, then we help you keep it off – for good!'



Rachel Ricketts, Weight Loss Consultant

One-to-one support

Rachel and her team give weekly one-to-one consultations, guiding you through the programme with personalised support, lots of empathy and total conviction in the success of the programme. Email support is available in between consultations.

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With an average weight loss of 7-14lb a month for clients and hundreds of hand written testimonials, Rachel's results speak for themselves.

Clients often comment on how impressed their doctors are with their results. 'My doctor is very happy – I've been able to come off blood pressure and cholesterol medication,' says one. Another doctor said, 'All my lady patients on thyroid medication are struggling to lose weight, but you've lost 2 ½ stone despite being on thyroxine – well done!'

With an average weight loss of 7-14lb a month for clients and hundreds of hand written testimonials, Rachel's results speak for themselves. 'I see real results daily, time after time I see people's lives change in front of me.'

Rachel offers free consultations for those who are wanting to lose their weight once and for all

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MY COUNTRYSIDE JULIE WALTERS

The award-winning actress on her rural lifestyle in Sussex and farming organically

Eskdale in Cumbria is one of the most beautiful spots I've filmed in. It was for *She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas* in 1985, set on an outward-bound course in the Lake District, which was heavenly – you can see why the Romantic poets were inspired there. Kettlewell in the Yorkshire Dales, where we were for *Calendar Girls*, was also wonderful. We stayed in an amazing 17th-century hotel, The Devonshire Arms, in Bolton Abbey. **The majority of the Harry Potter films were shot at Leavesden Studio in Hertfordshire, a former World War II RAF base.** So the scenes that took place outside The Burrow, where my character, Mrs Weasley, lived, were filmed on the old airfield, and the interiors in the studio. A brilliant designer created the props, like the knitting that clicks away on its own. It was amazing to watch them working. **More recently, I've been shooting the second series of *Indian Summers* in Penang, Malaysia.** There couldn't be a

greater contrast to the British countryside. The club that Cynthia, my character, owns is in an area where tigers roamed a century ago. On my first day there, I stopped in the middle of a scene and said, "What's that? Is someone drilling?" But it was the cicadas. **I enjoyed the otherness of being there, but it did make me crave the ancient woodland that surrounds my farm in West Sussex.** There were times when I thought, "I'd just like to walk through the woods now with the dog." That's what I was looking forward to doing when I got home. **I chose Sussex because I used to live in Fulham and the nearest countryside was down the A3.** I'd also



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Julie welcomes the seasonal delights of wild garlic and new-born lambs at her farm



recently made *Buster* with Phil Collins, who lived down there, so we went to visit him and started looking for a place. That was 27 years ago now. I had always dreamed of living in the countryside with someone who had nothing to do with the business, but farming wasn't something I'd aspired to do. As it turned out, my husband was very into all that, so it worked well. Also, my mother came from a farming background, so maybe it's in my blood.

I love the farm smells and the daily activities – and there's something very comforting about the changing seasons. Now is a beautiful time of

year: the days are getting lighter and the birds are starting to nest, crocuses are in bloom and you see the bright acid green of new buds on the trees. Soon our woods will start to fill up with wild garlic, primroses and wild orchids.

I'm not especially hands-on with the farm, but I've fed orphan lambs and sometimes grow tomatoes. I've planted carrots, rocket, kale, spinach, potatoes and all sorts of lettuce in our raised beds, and cucumbers, peppers and courgettes in the greenhouse. Swedes are the only

thing that's eluded me. I get all this beautiful foliage and nothing under the soil.

Growing organically appeals to me because it just tastes better. The sweetcorn we grew was so delicious, you could eat it raw. I believe chemical

sprays take goodness out of the land, killing wildlife and destroying the eco system. I also think animals raised organically are better treated. On the farm we have

Sussex cattle, 300 sheep, some pigs, 600 chickens for eggs and a turkey for Christmas. 🐔

My mother came from a farming background, so it's in my blood

📺 Indian Summers returns to Channel 4 soon.



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IT'S PRETTY MUCH UNIVERSALLY

acknowledged that a house can never have too much space. However much of it we have, somehow we always want more, as rooms fill up with furniture, books, artwork and the other possessions that make a place feel like home. So clever decorating is all about how you use the space available – not just inventing stylish storage solutions, but choosing furniture to suit the scale, colours to make the room feel bigger, patterns that won't dominate it, and planning the layout to let you live the way you want to. The less space you have, the more carefully you need to use it, so I hope this little magazine will help you make the most of it, wherever you live.

Dary Smith

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Photographs Caroline Arber; Simon Bevan; Alun Callender; Nick Carter/Gap Interiors; Lisa Cohen; Charlie Colmer; Brent Darby; Chris Drake; Gap Interiors; Catherine Gratwicke; Hearst Studios UK; Tim James-Mabel Gray; Emma Lee; Simon McBride/Photoshot; Claire Richardson; Nassima Rothacker; Richard Weaver Photography; Rachel Whiting, Polly Wreford/Loupe Images

Published with the April 2016 issue of
Country Living Magazine

© The National Magazine Company Ltd trading as Hearst Magazines UK 2016.
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1



Painted furniture often has a fresher, more light-reflective look than bare timber. Here, the chairs and sideboard have been painted in varied shades of blue, pink and white to offset the wood of the dining table. A geometric artwork adds to the light, spacious feel.

2

A wooden bench or settle topped with cushions makes a space-saving alternative to a sofa or armchair, especially if painted a pale shade or one that blends into the wall colour behind it. A small chest can provide a simple yet stylish side table, too.



3

Look for slimline side tables that will provide an extra surface in narrow hallways and small bedrooms (they are especially useful if the sides can fold down).





6 Fridges and freezers are available in scaled-down versions for those without the room for outsize American-style designs. A tiny appliance can be hidden beneath a kitchen table or worktop to keep the floor as clear as possible.

4 It's the classic solution to the smallest of cooking spaces. The legendary Baby Belling – mainstay of British bedsits since the 1930s – provides a table-top hob and grill.



5 A deep window recess works as a useful extra shelf for pots of herbs and kitchen essentials. Fit a pan rail across the recess to create out-of-the-way storage for utensils – it also takes the place of a curtain, allowing maximum light in.





7

Polished leather suitcases, sturdy filing boxes and decorative hatboxes can offer extra storage in a bedroom. Stack them on top of your wardrobe to hold items you don't need to access frequently, or slide them under beds so they can be pulled out when needed.

8

Clever positioning of screens and dividers can turn one room into two or more without losing any light or giving a cramped feel. Here, a low-level partition separates sitting and eating areas, while a sliding door offers easy access to the bedroom beyond.



9

Deep storage drawers make the most of the space under window seats and other built-in benches, allowing you to tidy away household clutter and books when there's no room left on shelves.



10 A circular table takes up less space than a square one in a small dining room or eating area – and it's more sociable, too. Many pedestal tables have a swing top that will fold into a vertical panel, letting you store the whole thing flat against a wall.



A pretty pelmet trimming the top of a kitchen window makes the need for curtains or blinds redundant. Fitting shelves instead of wall units gives a small room a lighter, more open feel, and cottage-style curtains hung below the worktops can replace cupboards, so you won't need space for the doors to swing open.

12

Cushioned benches create extra seating in narrow hallways and alcoves (great for pulling on Wellingtons and walking boots), and the area beneath can be curtained off to provide additional storage for outdoor gear and gardening accessories.





13 Roller blinds are always a space-saving option, keeping windows clear of unnecessary curtain fabric and letting in maximum light when they're pulled right up. Here, the effect is accentuated by the neat, nautical look of blue and white stripes on the reverse side (left).

14 Make use of a chimney breast alcove to store firewood, and you'll be able to keep it handy – and bone dry – ready for use (below left).

15 An elegantly carved kitchen wall cabinet (below) takes up less space than a square-cornered unit, tapering to a narrow spice shelf that provides handy extra storage just above the worktop.





Bunkbeds are as popular as ever for stacking sleeping arrangements in small rooms. They're always fun for children to use and, with a smart design, good mattresses and a sturdy ladder, can create occasional sleeping space for adults, too.

17



A platform bed will maximise the play space in a child's bedroom and keep the room as tidy as possible. Here, the design is high enough for a whole bank of drawers to be built underneath, providing ample storage for clothes, bed linen and toys.

19 Styles of post-war furniture recall an era when saving everything was the norm – including space, which was at a premium in scullery kitchens and prefab houses. This Formica-topped vintage folding table (right) has a slimline look as well as being practical.



18 Hooks and pegs offer useful hanging storage for clothes and jewellery in a bedroom to linens and utensils in the kitchen (above). As well as freeing up floors, worksurfaces and tables, they allow you to display colourful accessories against a contrasting wall.





20

Make use of walls wherever you can. Moving boot storage to high-level shelves in a hallway frees up floor space so even the dog gets his own made-to-measure sleeping area.

21



A larder cupboard – freestanding or installed as part of a run of cabinets – can work in a small kitchen. It will create built-in storage for pots and pans, as well as cooking ingredients, and keep your household essentials behind closed doors.



22 Bedrooms don't need as much floor space as living areas, so squeeze in twin beds and use the height of the room to create visual impact. A sloping attic ceiling can be decorated with wallpaper, photographs or découpage images to highlight the interesting angle.

RIGHT A small basin will save space in a bathroom or cloakroom. Streamlined curves will take up even less room, while an integral shelf provides a place for toiletries and cosmetics.



23



24

Play with colour and pattern by incorporating panels of wallpaper in contained areas to line an alcove or wall shelves. Small-scale prints such as polkadots or neat geometrics will match the proportions of the room, especially if you choose fresh, crisp colours that create a spacious effect.





25 Folding furniture is invaluable where space is short. Neat and practical, it will store away flat when not needed – and chairs can even be hung on a wall to free up precious floor areas.



27 Tailored blinds are a great solution to the problem of small or awkwardly set windows – ideal to fit into a recess where the angled ceiling means there is no room for a curtain rail.



26 A small fireplace, chosen to suit the proportions of a room, will create a focal point without dominating.



28 Chairs designed to stack are always a useful addition – they provide extra seating when needed but can be stored out of the way in an alcove or cupboard when not in use*.

29



30 Shutters are perfect for small windows, as they fold right back to let maximum light into the room. Here, they have been painted white like the rest of the room, so they disappear into the walls for a totally streamlined effect.

31 The classic nest of tables, with descending sizes slotting under one another like a set of Russian dolls, has never gone out of fashion since it first appeared in the 18th century. Small in scale and practical to store, they have a host of uses in living rooms where space is tight*.

ABOVE An all-white colour scheme will make a small room seem bigger. Along with the bedding and painted floor, touches of light-reflective gilding and the graceful shape of the bed frame, chandelier and little carved cabinet add to the light, spacious feel.



*ORIGINALS NEST OF TABLES WITH WALNUT TOPS, £735, ERCOL (ERCOL.COM)



32

High-level shelves will make use of otherwise wasted wall space. Add a bookshelf above a door lintel, or use a high ledge to display artefacts that you want to keep safely away from the traffic of everyday life.





33 A bureau turns a restricted-height area into a miniature office. Small drawers are perfect for filing stationery and accessories, while the front folds down into an instant desktop.



34 Cleverly planned storage can be tailored to suit anything you need a place for – even the television. It's good to be able to close the door on one when it's not in use, plus not waste a surface or tabletop.



ABOVE Eke out the area under the stairs for storage and display. A white painted chest of drawers fits perfectly into a sloping space where a collection of framed family photos and travel souvenirs accentuates the line of the staircase above.



36

Plan built-in seating and storage to fit the space available. Deep storage drawers are useful at floor level and baskets slotted onto shelves create an instant filing system. In this clever layout, the roof space has been used for a sleeping platform under the eaves, reached by a ladder that stores flat against the wall.



37

However restricted your kitchen space, you can still find room to enjoy the warmth and style of a cooking range: small-scale Agas are neat enough to slot between standard units.



39

Mid-century kitchen units tend to be slimline and smaller in scale than their modern counterparts, matching the smaller rooms they were designed for. This vintage cabinet, with its pale paintwork and sleek chrome handles, would provide practical storage in a retro-style kitchen.



38

Look out for dual-purpose storage such as this wire basket-table*. The open-mesh shelves are ideal for holding toys, shoes, magazines and other clutter, while the top provides an extra surface to use as a bench or coffee table. And, because it's on trolley wheels, it can be moved easily to wherever it's needed.

*FROM A SELECTION, ECORA (ECORA.CO.UK)



Chairs and sofas that are raised off the ground create a lighter, less solid effect. Look for furniture in pale wood shades and neat, small-scale shapes that free up floor space.





41 ABOVE A big mirror can double the size of a small room. Armoires and wardrobes with them work well in a bedroom. Here, a small bathroom is opened up by a large mirror propped against one wall, to reflect the space and bounce more light into the room.



43 Small-scale armchairs and other upholstered chairs – especially in plain, pale fabrics or tiny patterns such as polkadots or sprigged flowers – are perfect for bedrooms, landings and cottage-style sitting rooms. Traditional nursing chairs – high-backed with a low seat – make particularly neat additions.



42 Choose pale, space-enhancing colours for walls. Whites, creams and pastel shades will all help to make small rooms feel larger, especially blues and violets from the cool end of the spectrum, which have a ‘receding’ effect that makes them appear further away.



44 Little wooden stools and upholstered footstools are invaluable in small homes, supplementing chairs in a sitting room (especially good for children) and creating useful extra surfaces for tea trays, books and piles of linen.

45

Make a grand gesture in a small bathroom. Let an elegant floor-standing bath take centre stage and streamline the room around it with petite pieces and slimline accessories. Here, siting it below the window allows the sill to be used for toiletries.





ABOVE A narrow alcove in a bedroom will provide just enough space for a small table topped with a pretty cloth and a tray, creating an improvised dressing table for guests. Add a few little dishes to hold their cosmetics and jewellery, plus a colourful potted plant.



47 Cladding, peg-rails, walls and shelves painted the same colour create a streamlined effect with unobtrusive storage and display opportunities. The top of the bathroom panelling here provides an additional narrow ledge for small pictures and toiletries.

48 Traditional bentwood furniture has a light, open structure that seems to take up less space visually than solid pieces, and looks elegant in any room.





Use a tight roof space to fit a walk-in shower in an attic bathroom or to create an en suite, with a tiled ledge built into the lower part and a Velux window cut into the sloping ceiling.

49

50



Enhance the warm, enclosed feel of a small room by using rich, deep colours that emphasise its cosiness. Add a small corner table to create a study area, line the walls with books and display items for a deliberately cluttered effect, and look for furniture and accessories that contribute jewel-bright accents.

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THE COUNTRY LIVING GOWER RANGE FROM DFS

THE GOWER SOFA MADE BY DFS for *Country Living* is a classic design featuring brushed cotton/linen union upholstery with a comfortable but elegant shape. Four sizes are available – medium, large, grand and a corner sofa – in 62 colours in stripe, check, plain, pattern, velvet and plaid fabrics, or leather at an extra cost, and the collection also includes a matching footstool. Made in the UK, frames are crafted from hardwoods, plus turned wood and caster feet come in natural and brass, antique and gun metal or natural and antique. For more details, visit dfs.co.uk.

The *Country Living* Collection exclusively available at DFS. Gower medium natural check **sofa**, £1,198; natural check **chair**, £998; rectangular natural check **footstool**, £459; taupe **cushions**: small, £29; large, £39

